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FOR



THE LIE

By HENRY ARTHUR JONES

THE THEATRE OF IDEAS

A burlesque allegory and three one-act plays:
THE GOAL; HER TONGUE; and GRACE MARY.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF A NATIONAL DRAMA

containing lectures delivered to Harvard, Yale
and Columbia Universities; at the Royal Insti-
tution, London; with other lectures, essays and
papers on the Drama, and photogravure por-
trait of the author.

THE DIVINE GIFT

A play in three acts, with dedication to Professor
GILBERT MURRAY, LL.D., Regius Professor of
Greek at Oxford, and photogravure portrait of
the author.

THE LIE

A play in four acts, as played by Miss Margaret
Illington.

OTHER PLAYS BY HENRY ARTHUR JONES

THE SILVER KING	THE ROGUES COMEDY
SAINTS AND SINNERS	THE PHYSICIAN
THE MIDDLEMAN	THE LIARS
JUDAH	THE MANŒUVRES OF
THE DANCING GIRL	JANE
THE CRUSADERS	CARNAC SAHIB
THE TEMPTER	MRS. DANE'S DEFENCE
THE MASQUERADERS	WHITEWASHING JULIA
THE CASE OF REBEL- LIOUS SUSAN	JOSEPH ENTANGLED
THE TRIUMPH OF THE PHILISTINES	THE HYPOCRITES
MICHAEL AND HIS LOST ANGEL	DOLLY REFORMING HERSELF
	MARY GOES FIRST



To Henry Arthur Jones
with the everlasting affection
and gratitude of Sam Elmer.
Margaret Livingston.

The Lie

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

HENRY ARTHUR JONES

*Author of "Mrs. Dane's Defence," "The Theatre of Ideas,"
"The Divine Gift," etc.*

New York

George H. Doran Company

23498.4.31



*Gift of
John Craig*

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DEDICATION
to
MISS MARGARET ILLINGTON

DEAR MARGARET ILLINGTON:

The highest and rarest gift an actor can possess is that power of sure and instant self-excitement which enables him suddenly to reach the great emotional scenes of drama by a daring spontaneous instinct, and to unite the whole audience with him in his frenzy of self-abandonment. It is told of our English Macready that before going on the stage to act any great passionate scene, he had to work himself into a fury at the wings, like the lion who could not roar till he had thoroughly lashed himself with his tail. But Edmund Kean's performances in Othello and Richard were said to be like reading Shakespeare by continuous flashes of lightning accompanied by rolls of thunder.

In asking you to accept the dedication of "The Lie," I abdicate my authorship for the moment, and become one of the audience whom you move every night to such tumultuous response to your splendidly sustained outbursts of emotion. And in printing the play I give those who witness your acting the chance of reading my words, and comparing them with your impassioned utterance. They will then be able to judge how deeply indebted I am to you for your rendering of Elinor Shale. In speaking of your performance I am justified in calling up memories of the great acting of the past. A New York paper, after seeing you in "The Lie," has called you "The American Sarah Bernhardt." Let me suggest that when these troublous times have gone by and France again resumes her sway in the drama—let me suggest that the rising French actress be called "The French Margaret Illington."

Always faithfully and gratefully yours,
Henry Arthur Jones.

PERSONS REPRESENTED

SIR ROBERT SHALE, BART. *of Shale Abbey*

NOLL DIBDIN

GERALD FORSTER, *of the Hall Waventry*

HAMP, *Butler at the Abbey*

DICK

ELINOR SHALE, *Sir Robert's Granddaughter*

LUCY SHALE, *her younger sister*

MISS PINSENT, *a dressmaker*

GIBBARD

MRS. CALLARD

ACT I

SCENE: *Drawing room at Shale Abbey, a lofty room in a fourteenth century building. At back is a large mullioned window, giving a view of a north midland landscape at sunset in Winter. At a distance of about two hundred yards is the Dower House, a small, unpretentious eighteenth century building. On the right side centre is a door. On the left side down stage is a huge fireplace, with burning logs on the hearth between large brass dogs. Above fireplace left is a handsome oak staircase leading off left. The first four steps are shown, and mount to a landing. A door shuts off the remaining steps. The walls of the room are weather-stained and cracked. The room itself is rather barely furnished with a few pieces of handsome old oak furniture. The time is about four on an afternoon in late November. Discover HAMP, dozing in a large arm-chair above the fire. He is about sixty-five, with a coarse, surly, humorous face which gives evidence of drink. He is slovenly in his dress and habits, and independent in his manner and speech. He is slightly, but not very obviously, tipsy. A bell is rung impatiently off stage. A pause and the bell is again rung more impatiently. Another pause. Enter MISS PINSENT L. She is about thirty, very well dressed,*

with the manners of a good class London shop lady. She enters quickly and is evidently in a temper.

MISS PINSENT. Oh, there you are. I've been ringing my bell the last half hour.

HAMP. [*Draws himself up out of his sprawling attitude, but does not rise.*] You're one of them folks as want too much attention in this world.

MISS PINSENT. [*Looking at him indignantly.*] Is that your attitude in the presence of a lady?

HAMP. No. This is my attitude to young persons out of shops.

MISS PINSENT. I'll have you to know that I'm here as a visitor, by Miss Shale's invitation.

HAMP. Excuse me. You're here as a dressmaker, to mend up Miss Shale's dresses, and to make more work for Gibbard and me.

MISS PINSENT. While I am here, I am a member of the family.

HAMP. Not by lawful holy wedlock in church. [*Shaking his head at her.*] Far from it!

MISS PINSENT. [*Indignantly.*] Oh! [*Goes to bell and pulls it angrily.*] You've been drinking, I suppose.

HAMP. Now it's no use you're asking me that. Because not a drop do you wheedle out of me. [*She again pulls the bell violently.*] If you don't take care, you'll break that bell-rope, and bell-ropes are scarce at the Abbey.

MISS PINSENT. I will thank you to keep your insolence to yourself. [*Still ringing. The bell-rope comes down.*

HAMP. There! What did I tell you?

[GIBBARD enters, at door R. *She is nominally the parlour maid at the Abbey, but at the present moment is general servant and drudge. She is a country girl and is in working morning dress, with her sleeves turned up.*

MISS PINSENT. Gibbard, I've been ringing for an hour.

GIBBARD. I've got other things to do beside wait on you. There's all cook's work.

MISS PINSENT. My fire has gone out.

HAMP. Got a scuttle of coals in your pocket, Gibbard? The young lady is afraid of getting chilblains.

MISS PINSENT. I can't sit there without a fire.

GIBBARD. I can't help your fire going out, miss. I haven't started with the dinner.

[Exit GIBBARD at door R.]

HAMP. There, you see!

MISS PINSENT. I've never been in a house like this——

HAMP. No, and you never will be again. So you make the most of it while you've got the chance.

MISS PINSENT. Is there anybody to bring some coals to my sitting room?

[SIR ROBERT SHALE enters, R. *He is about seventy-five, but is sturdy and well preserved, of the English country gentleman type. He has, however, become rather coarse in manners through association with his inferiors. He has a country, weather-beaten complexion, which is marred by his drinking habits. He is by turns jovial and irascible, very autocratic*

and unreasonable. His dress is rather old and shabby. A foxhound cub follows him. HAMP has risen quickly at his entrance, before SIR ROBERT perceives him. He pulls himself together and his manner changes and becomes respectful.

MISS PINSENT. [*Continuing so that SIR ROBERT can hear.*] When Miss Shale returns I shall tell her of your insolence——

SIR ROBERT. What's the matter, Hamp?

HAMP. Well, Sir Robert, from the way this young person orders the servants about, you'd think the Abbey belonged to her.

MISS PINSENT. I merely asked you to take some coals to my sitting room.

HAMP. Ordered me, Miss. And ordered me in a very haughty, aggravating way. And pranced about——

MISS PINSENT. I did not prance.

HAMP. [*Correcting her with emphasis.*] And pranced about, Sir Robert. [*Giving an exaggerated illustration.*] And rushes up to the bell-rope and pulls it with that violence. [*Picking up the bell-rope from the floor.*] I had to expostulate with her.

MISS PINSENT. Sir Robert, I've been sitting there without any fire.

SIR ROBERT. We're all obliged to rough it a little, now we're short of servants. You aren't very comfortable at the Abbey, Miss Pinsent?

MISS PINSENT. No, I'm not.

SIR ROBERT. You're like the rest of us. We're none of us very comfortable, are we, Pompey?

[*Caressing the hound.*]

MISS PINSENT. When Miss Shale invited me she said, "We shall treat you as one of ourselves."

[*Horror on HAMP's face.*]

SIR ROBERT. That meant that we should have to treat you to a good many inconveniences, eh, Pompey? My granddaughter ought to have told you——

MISS PINSENT. She did. And I've tried to make myself agreeable [*HAMP exhibits the bell-rope to SIR ROBERT in comment*], and fall in with your ways.

SIR ROBERT. I'm afraid that's difficult for a young lady in your position. We've been at the Abbey for six hundred years, and our ways take a good deal of falling into, don't they, Pompey?

[*ELINOR enters R. She is about twenty-four, healthy, good-looking, but with an anxious, unsatisfied and slightly care-worn expression. She enters with outdoor clothes, takes them off as she speaks and throws them over chair. There is a little pause as she enters and she looks around.*]

ELINOR. Is anything the matter?

MISS PINSENT. I wish to go back to London tomorrow, if you please.

ELINOR. Oh, Miss Pinsent, that's quite impossible. You promised to stay till you'd made my new evening dress. [*Looking anxiously at SIR ROBERT, who is playing with Pompey, and then at HAMP.*] What has happened?

MISS PINSENT. This man has been grossly insolent to me.

HAMP. Insolent? The young lady has done nothing but ring her bell all the afternoon. Gibbard and me can't always be dancing attendance on her.

MISS PINSENT. [*Indignantly.*] Oh!

ELINOR. Never mind, Hamp. Please see about getting tea.

HAMP. And when I expostulated with her, she vented her rage on the innocent bell-rope.

[*Showing the bell-rope.*]

ELINOR. I'll inquire into it by and by. Please get the tea. [*HAMP solemnly deposits the bell-rope on a chair, glaring at MISS PINSENT as he does so. Exit HAMP at door R.*]

ELINOR. I'm so sorry! I know Hamp is dreadfully rude.

MISS PINSENT. I'll finish your blouse to-night, but I must leave the other dresses.

ELINOR. Oh, I can't hear of it! We'll do all we can to make you comfortable. Bring your work in here.

SIR ROBERT. My dear Elinor!

ELINOR. Yes, Grandy. [*To MISS PINSENT.*] We'll make this your workroom for the present.

MISS PINSENT. I'm sure I'd better go. [*Exit L.*]

SIR ROBERT. So you're going to turn the Abbey into a milliner's shop?

ELINOR. Yes, for the next few days.

SIR ROBERT. And I suppose I'm to be the confounded shop-walker?

ELINOR. Now, Grandy, don't be naughty! If I'm to go to the County Ball, I must get an evening dress from somewhere.

SIR ROBERT. When my clothes get shabby, I don't invite some damned tailor to come and stay with me. I hunt up a new man. Can't you give somebody in Waventry a turn?

ELINOR. They can't make an evening dress in Wa-

ventry. And we've hunted them all too much. I was ashamed to walk down the High Street this afternoon.

SIR ROBERT. What did you do about the summons for that confounded cook's money?

ELINOR. I paid it. And eleven shillings costs. Then I had two and three pence left.

SIR ROBERT. And she was such a rotten bad cook! Sends us up pheasant without any bread sauce, and then county-courts us for her wages. I suppose Hamp will be the next one to send in an ultimatum.

ELINOR. Oh, no! Hamp will never leave us. He knows he'd never get another situation. And I shall never get another situation. [*With great bitterness.*]

SIR ROBERT. You'll get married some day, I suppose?

ELINOR. Get married? What chance have I down here? With no money to go about, and nothing to make me look nice! With bills owing everywhere, and everybody fighting shy of us! Oh, my God, I'm shut in here; I'm shut in this awful prison, and there's no way out of it!

SIR ROBERT. [*Caressing the hound over the fire.*] England began to go to decay in eighteen-thirty-two——

ELINOR. Oh, never mind England! It's I who am going to decay! It's I who am wasting all my life in this hole! Will no one come and take me out of it—buy me for a slave—or—something—anything—anything! [*Bursts into tears and sits crying.*]

SIR ROBERT. That was the fatal year for England—eighteen-thirty-two. My old grandfather warned them. He saw what was coming!

ELINOR. Then why didn't he stop my being born? Grandy, I can't bear this much longer. [*With a sud-*

den revulsion, laughs at herself.] What's the use of saying that? I've got to bear it.

SIR ROBERT. Your Aunt Kate ought to take you.

ELINOR. She has Lucy. It's very good of her to have one of us. But I'm sorry now that I let Lucy go. I was the elder, and Aunt Kate did give me the first chance. I ought to have taken it, but Lucy over-persuaded me. And I thought I was doing a splendid, generous thing for Lucy. So I was. But I was doing a very foolish thing for myself. Self-sacrifice is a mistake.

SIR ROBERT. By Jove, yes! I've found that out, all my life.

ELINOR. And Lucy will marry some rich man—she's clever enough.

SIR ROBERT. Well, why shouldn't you? Why don't you set your cap at young Forster, now he's back in England?

ELINOR. Oh, don't talk like that!

SIR ROBERT. He seemed to take a good deal of notice of you at Lady Betchworth's the other day.

ELINOR. He said he'd call. That was over a fortnight ago.

SIR ROBERT. He's like the rest. Looks down upon us because we're poor. By Jove, yes, and there's that old frump, Lady Betchworth! [*Getting into a sudden rage.*] I could tell some tales about her when she was young. And I will, too! I'll let everybody know! They're all alike! The only one of the whole set that looks up to me is that little snivelling teetotal curate! And he began to lecture me. By God! The little rabbit began to lecture me! He did, Pompey!

ELINOR. What about?

SIR ROBERT. Said he'd seen me coming out of the "Shale Arms."

ELINOR. Well, I suppose he had.

SIR ROBERT. Yes. And he'll see me again. Why shouldn't I? Good comfortable old English Inn, and my own property!

[ELINOR looks at him, makes a helpless, despairing gesture, then goes to him.]

ELINOR. Grandy, this can't go on! We must pull ourselves out of it somehow. Won't Cousin Jack do something?

SIR ROBERT. Not a sixpence. That's a pretty nephew for you. If he was the true English breed, he'd cut off the entail and make my old age comfortable.

ELINOR. We must let the Abbey.

SIR ROBERT. We should get a few hundred a year, and all the tradespeople would be down on us like vultures. No; young Forster is our sheet anchor. We'll ask him to dinner.

ELINOR. We've no cook; and if you were to——

SIR ROBERT. If I what?

ELINOR. If you took a glass too much——

SIR ROBERT. Glass too much! You're as bad as that little toad of a curate. We'll ask young Forster to dinner. Only you must get rid of your dressmaker friend.

ELINOR. Miss Pinsent must stay till she has made my evening dress.

SIR ROBERT. Nonsense! Pack her off and get a smart one from London. There's your mother's locket and cross.

ELINOR. No. She gave me them for my daughter—if I ever have one. I'll never part from them.

SIR ROBERT. [*Looking around at the room.*] We'll get rid of this old rubbish——

ELINOR. We have got rid of it. If we sell any more, what will the place look like?

SIR ROBERT. Well, young Forster is our only chance, so mind you play your cards well.

ELINOR. Oh, don't talk like that! You make me feel I'm trying to trap him. And I think [*Very softly and tenderly*] I could really care for him.

[*Enter HAMP with the tea things.*]

HAMP. The case of port has just arrived, Sir Robert.

[*Laying the tea things.*]

ELINOR. Port?

HAMP. Shall I open it?

SIR ROBERT. Yes. We'll sample it for dinner.

HAMP. Yes, Sir Robert.

ELINOR. Tell Miss Pinsent that tea is ready.

HAMP. Yes, miss. [*Exit upstairs L.*]

ELINOR. You've been ordering some port wine? Where from?

SIR ROBERT. There's a new wine merchant just started at Waventry. He sent me a circular, and asked me to give him a trial. So I did.

ELINOR. Poor man! [*SIR ROBERT is going off, followed by the hound.*] You're going out?

SIR ROBERT. Yes, my dear. I promised Burton I'd see him about the new kennels for the hounds.

ELINOR. At the "Shale Arms," I suppose?

SIR ROBERT. I daresay I shall find him somewhere about. [*HAMP has reëntered by staircase.*]

HAMP. The young person seems to be huffy about my expostulating with her. She's packing her boxes.

[*Lighting the lamps.*]

SIR ROBERT. So we're going to lose her?

HAMP. Yes, I'm afraid, Sir Robert.

[*Exchanging a look of understanding with*
SIR ROBERT.

SIR ROBERT. I thought we might. Come along, Pompey.

[*Exit at door with hound as MISS PINSENT comes downstairs from door L.*

MISS PINSENT. I've thought it over, Miss Shale, and I'm sure I'd better leave to-morrow morning.

ELINOR. Oh, no! I can't let you. Well, sit down and have some tea now.

[MISS PINSENT sits.

[HAMP has lighted lamps, glaring at MISS PINSENT. He now goes to table and picks up bell-rope, glaring at MISS PINSENT.

HAMP. I suppose I'd better send into Waventry and get a man to put our bell-ropes in order.

ELINOR. Please take that away and bring in some more logs for the fire.

HAMP. Yes, miss.

[*Goes out R., glaring at MISS PINSENT.*

ELINOR. [*At tea table, pouring out tea.*] Now, Miss Pinsent, I shan't let you go. The doctor ordered you a change, and Madame Duvernay gave you three weeks to stay with us at the Abbey.

MISS PINSENT. You said I should be one of the family.

ELINOR. I think I have treated you as one of the family, and you mustn't take any notice of Sir Robert and the servants.

MISS PINSENT. I really couldn't put up with it for another fortnight.

ELINOR. I've put up with it for a good many years, and I shall have to put up with it—all my life, I suppose.

MISS PINSENT. [*Genuinely sympathetic.*] I'm so sorry for you!

ELINOR. Then won't you stay for my sake? If you don't, I can't go to the County Ball. And I do want to look nice, just for once. Won't you stay? [*very pleadingly.*] If I asked you as my friend—

MISS PINSENT. [*After a little pause.*] Yes, I will stay.

ELINOR. That is good of you. Thank you so much! I think we might start upon the evening dress at once.

MISS PINSENT. You didn't decide which one you'd have.

ELINOR. No; but eight pounds is my very utmost limit.

MISS PINSENT. Then it will have to be the plain gray.

ELINOR. Yes, I suppose. How much did you say the brocade would be?

MISS PINSENT. Twelve pounds.

ELINOR. Oh, I wish I dared! No; we owe so much money. It must be the gray. It will look very well!

MISS PINSENT. Oh, yes! Of course, not like the brocade.

ELINOR. Oh, if I—— No, no, no! That's settled. Now, after tea you shall bring all your work in here, and we'll have a jolly evening.

MISS PINSENT. I hope Sir Robert won't mind.

ELINOR. I'm afraid he'll be at the "Shale Arms" till dinner. And after—he may be very merry, or very bad-tempered. You mustn't take any notice.

MISS PINSENT. [*Rising from tea table.*] I'll go and unpack, and then I'll come down.

ELINOR. Yes, do. Bring the patterns of the brocade. Bring them all. I can look at them if I can't afford them.

[*Exit MISS PINSENT. Left alone, ELINOR shows contentment, and poses as in an evening dress, looking down at the folds of her present dress, arranging and draping them. GIBBARD, still in her working dress, enters R., with her sleeves turned up.*

GIBBARD. There's a gentleman asking for Sir Robert.

ELINOR. What did you say?

GIBBARD. I told him Sir Robert was out. Then he asked if you were at home, and he said: "Will you tell Miss Shale that Mr. Forster has called?"

ELINOR. [*Shows great vexation.*] Why didn't you show him in? And, Gibbard, when you are in that dress you should let Hamp go to the door. Where is he?

GIBBARD. Hamp's in the cellar, and give strict orders he wasn't to be disturbed.

ELINOR. Show Mr. Forster in, and, Gibbard, change your dress before you show him out.

[*Exit GIBBARD R. A few moments later she reënters, showing in GERALD FORSTER. GERALD is a rather tall, handsome, distinguished man, about thirty-five.*

GIBBARD. Here is the gentleman, miss. [*Exit.*

GERALD. How d'ye do?

ELINOR. How d'ye do? [*Shaking hands.*] You find

us in a muddle to-day. We're short of servants. Do please excuse it. Let me give you some tea.

GERALD. Thanks!

ELINOR. I'm afraid it's rather cold. Shall I ring for some more?

GERALD. No, please don't. I'll take it as it is.

[They sit down to the tea table.]

ELINOR. I'm sorry my grandfather is out, but I dare say he'll be back before you go.

GERALD. I'm afraid I can't stay long. I'm motoring to the junction to catch the express. I oughtn't to have called in such a casual way.

ELINOR. Oh, yes! Milk? Sugar?

GERALD. Very little milk, and very little sugar. When I get back from London, will you allow me to call again?

ELINOR. Yes; we shall be pleased. But I'm afraid you'll still find us in a muddle, and we shall still be short of servants. I'm telling you this because I'm sure everybody else must have told you, and you know all about us. So it's no use trying to hide it.

GERALD. I shall be glad to come and take you just as I find you now.

ELINOR. Well, to do ourselves justice, we aren't always quite so much upside down as we are to-day. Sometimes our butler is in evidence; and sometimes he is fairly presentable. And sometimes—in fact, nearly always—we have a cook. Though not often a very good one—not one we could ask you to dinner upon—

GERALD. Try me. You don't know the kind of dinner ten months of the year in Egypt.

Not so bad as you'd get here. I'm telling

you all this because I'm sure you've heard it already. And if you mean to know us——

[*With an anxious glance at him.*]

GERALD. Of course I mean to know you. When I came back to England, there was so much to do on my estate I hadn't time to see my neighbours. I meant to call the day after I saw you at Lady Betchworth's, but I had to go up to London, and I didn't get back till last night.

ELINOR. You're a very busy person.

GERALD. I am. There's my estate here—that's one man's work. Then there are the irrigation works in Egypt—that's three men's work, at least.

ELINOR. You haven't much time to give to your friends here, now you are back in England.

GERALD. I'm not in England to look after my estate. I came home to get my plans passed by the Government. As soon as that's done, I'm off to Egypt.

ELINOR. For long?

GERALD. I hope two years will see me through. Then I shall come back and settle down here for good. I don't know why I'm talking about myself.

ELINOR. Because it interests me. Another cup of tea? Do you spend much time in Cairo?

GERALD. A month or two sometimes. Then six months right away in the desert.

ELINOR. I should love to go to Cairo. I should love to go anywhere away from the Abbey.

GERALD. Why don't you come out next winter? You'd easily find a chaperon.

ELINOR. [*Shakes her head sadly.*] But I couldn't easily find any money. When do you go back to Egypt?

GERALD. I've two more months at home. I leave on the Thursday after the County Ball. You're sure to be there?

ELINOR. Yes, indeed! I'm seeing about my dress already.

GERALD. I should have gone back earlier, if you hadn't spoken about the County Ball at Lady Betchworth's.

ELINOR. [*Her face lights up with a rare flash of pleasure.*] Would you? Shall you be down here much before you go back to Egypt?

GERALD. That will depend upon whether I get my plans through easily. I shall run down here whenever I can spare the time. [*Rising.*] I hope I shall see something of you.

ELINOR. Yes, I hope so. You're not going?

GERALD. I must catch the express.

[*Looking at watch.*]

ELINOR. I'm sorry my grandfather hasn't come in.

GERALD. Perhaps you'd bring him over to dine with me one night?

ELINOR. We shall be pleased.

GERALD. I can find him a bottle of old port——

ELINOR. I hope you won't. I mean—if we are to know each other, it's better you should understand.

GERALD. I do understand.

[*Takes her hand very kindly.*]

ELINOR. Poor Grandy! He's old, and——

GERALD. He's a century behind his time. We mustn't blame him for that. Then I shall see you at the County Ball—and before?

ELINOR. But you're down here so little.

GERALD. I shouldn't have come down now, only I promised you I'd call——

ELINOR. [*Her face lights up again.*] You didn't come down on purpose to call on me?

GERALD. I had a few other things to do; but they could have waited. [*A long pause.*] Au revoir.

ELINOR. I'll see you to the door.

GERALD. No, I won't let you. I've known my way about the Abbey since I was a boy. [*Exit.*]

ELINOR. [*Goes to the open door, calls off.*] Gibbard, please show Mr. Forster out. [*Comes down with a radiant face, laughs a little, low, satisfied laugh, dances a few steps, pulls herself up.*] Don't be a lunatic! [*MISS PINSENT enters at door L., with a blouse nearly finished and several large patterns of evening-dress materials.*]

ELINOR. [*Eagerly.*] Miss Pinsent, I will have the brocade—I'll go to the twelve pounds.

MISS PINSENT. I'm sure you won't regret it.

ELINOR. [*Bright, eager.*] Show it to me again! Show them all to me again!

MISS PINSENT. [*Displays the patterns.*] It's so much handsomer than the gray!

ELINOR. That's very handsome. [*As MISS PINSENT spreads out patterns.*] So's that. I wish I could have a dress of every one.

MISS PINSENT. Has anything happened?

ELINOR. No. Why?

MISS PINSENT. You look so happy.

ELINOR. I am. I'm delighted to think I shall look nice for once in my life.

MISS PINSENT. You will, I'm sure.

[*LUCY enters suddenly R. She is a very pretty girl, a year or two younger than ELINOR. Her manner now is absent and distracted; ordinarily she is insinuating and pleasing, but watchful and a little feline. She is exceedingly well and coquettishly dressed, in outdoor winter clothes with furs.*]

ELINOR. Lucy! Lucy, old girl! Why what—what brings— [Rushes up to her and kisses her heartily.] I am glad— There's nothing the matter?

LUCY. No.

ELINOR. I thought you were at Worthing with Aunt Kate.

LUCY. She has gone back to London.

ELINOR. Why didn't you let us know you were coming?

LUCY. I thought I'd give you a surprise.

ELINOR. Well, you have. I am glad. This is my friend, Miss Pinsent, from Madame Duvernay's. She has kindly come down here to fit me out for the winter.

LUCY. How d'ye do?

MISS PINSENT. How d'ye do?

ELINOR. I was getting so shabby. You're sure nothing has happened?

LUCY. No. What should there be?

ELINOR. We haven't heard from you for nearly a month.

LUCY. I hate letter writing. So I thought I'd come and have a day or two with you.

ELINOR. I am pleased. Look! That's to be my new evening dress. Don't you think it will look handsome?

LUCY. [*Paying little attention.*] Very. I should think it would suit you.

ELINOR. Ah! You're used to pretty dresses. What splendid furs! And what a pretty hat!

LUCY. One must look decent.

ELINOR. Never mind. You'll see what Miss Pinsent is going to make for me. Now, Miss Pinsent, it's going to look as if it came straight from Paris?

MISS PINSENT. It will be an exact copy of one of our latest Parisian models.

[*LUCY makes a sign to ELINOR to get rid of MISS PINSENT.*

ELINOR. Miss Pinsent, couldn't you write up for the materials to-night? [*Looking at writing table.*] No pen and ink, as usual!

MISS PINSENT. I can write it in my own room.

ELINOR. Will you? And send it off to-night.

MISS PINSENT. Very well. I'll write it at once.

[*Exit MISS PINSENT by stairs L.*

ELINOR. Thank you. [*To LUCY.*] I'm so glad to see you! Those furs are lovely. [*Looking at LUCY.*] Lucy, there is something the matter!

LUCY. Nell, old girl, I'm done for.

ELINOR. Lucy!

LUCY. It's all over with me.

ELINOR. How? Tell me.

LUCY. You remember Dick Tallerton? [*ELINOR hesitates.*] He used to come to Aunt Kate's when you were staying with us.

ELINOR. Yes. I saw his death announced in the paper last week.

LUCY. Yes, he's dead. That's the awful thing of it.

ELINOR. Why?

LUCY. He was engaged to me.

ELINOR. Engaged to you? He was engaged to Lady Willindon's girl. He brought her to Aunt Kate's.

LUCY. He was engaged to both of us. But he would have married me.

ELINOR. You were very fond of him?

LUCY. I suppose I was.

ELINOR. I'm so sorry! It must be a great disappointment. Still, he wasn't quite the man I should have thought you'd choose.

LUCY. What was the matter with him?

ELINOR. Wasn't he—rather notorious—and fast?

LUCY. He was the heir. When Sir Thomas Tallerton died, I should have been Lady Tallerton, with twenty thousand a year.

ELINOR. Yes. Of course you're very much cut up. But you're young, dear—and pretty. You'll get over it in time. I'll help you bear it, darling.

LUCY. Someone has got to help me. My God, it is rotten luck!

ELINOR. I don't understand——

LUCY. He was engaged to Maud Willindon——

ELINOR. Yes?

LUCY. They were to be married in the spring. He daren't break it off. But I'd got him right enough.

ELINOR. Tell me all.

LUCY. Dick and I were to get away to Paris and be married there. Then he was to write his people and tell them. We were to go to some quiet place in the South and stay there some months. Then we were to go to the East and travel for a year or two. When we came back nobody would have asked when my baby was born.

ELINOR. Baby! [*Overwhelmed.*] Lucy! Lucy!

LUCY. Don't row me! I can't stand it.

ELINOR. I won't row you, dear; but—it's terrible!
[*Pause.*] Tell me everything.

LUCY. Three days before we were to start, Dick was taken with typhoid fever. It was all over in a week. And to think—I should have been safe by now—safe—with the title and everything clear in front of me. And now! Did you ever know such rotten luck?

ELINOR. I'll help you, dear.

LUCY. I knew you would, old girl!

ELINOR. What's to be done?

LUCY. I don't know. I'm pretty sick of it. Once or twice I've nearly ended it.

ELINOR. No, no! You mustn't talk like that.

LUCY. It's awful. I can't sleep, except with the morphia.

ELINOR. Lucy, you haven't taken to that?

LUCY. You find yourself in my mess, and you'd take to anything.

ELINOR. Does Aunt Kate know?

LUCY. No. I left her a month ago.

ELINOR. Left her?

LUCY. She was always nagging me about my behavior and extravagance. So we had a big flare-up and parted.

ELINOR. You shouldn't have done that.

LUCY. I thought I was safe to marry Dick.

ELINOR. Where have you been since you left Aunt Kate?

LUCY. In rooms in Eastbourne. Dick and his people were there. I'd arranged everything to meet him in Paris—then he sent me a note to say he was down

with typhoid. I've had an awful time. I daren't call on them—I couldn't get any news, till the worst came.

ELINOR. Won't the Tallertons help you?

LUCY. They'll have to. I saw Sir Thomas and Lady Tallerton last night and told them everything.

ELINOR. What did they say?

LUCY. They were furious. Lady Tallerton read me a sermon, the old hag! And Sir Thomas rowed me, and declared he'd never give me a penny.

ELINOR. Then they won't do anything?

LUCY. If they don't, I'll make a scandal.

ELINOR. You can't do that. It would only come back on you.

LUCY. I don't care! I'm ready to do anything. I must get some money from somewhere. I owe for all my clothes.

ELINOR. How much?

LUCY. Four or five hundred pounds.

ELINOR. Four or five hundred pounds!

LUCY. I had to have them. I couldn't have got hold of Dick if I hadn't looked smarter than Maud Willindon. And I did get hold of him.

ELINOR. Was it worth while?

LUCY. What?

ELINOR. If he really loved you, wouldn't he have wanted to take you honorably?

LUCY. You are a dear fool, Nell! You've lived down here all your life, and you've got the silliest old notions. Love and honour! That sort of stuff doesn't go down to-day, Nell. I wasn't going to be companion to Aunt Kate all my life, and dress on her thirty pounds a year. I meant to be Lady Tallerton, and I took the only way to get him. And I brought it off—only——

What rotten luck! It's no use talking. What's it like here? Just the same, I suppose?

ELINOR. Yes; only rather worse.

LUCY. Grandy?

ELINOR. As usual. It's nearly every night now. And he has Hamp to sit up with him.

LUCY. [*Looking at the patterns.*] But you're having a new evening dress.

ELINOR. One—in four years! I'm going to the County Ball.

LUCY. Quite right. Take what you can get, and enjoy yourself while you're young. It's your only chance.

ELINOR. I daresay you're right.

LUCY. I know I am. I didn't ask to be brought into this world. And when I get out of this mess I mean to have a good time to make up for this.

[GIBBARD enters at door R.]

GIBBARD. [*To LUCY.*] The porter has brought up your trunk from the station, miss.

LUCY. Have it taken up—— [*To ELINOR.*] Can I sleep with you?

ELINOR. Yes, of course. Have the trunk taken to my room, Gibbard.

GIBBARD. Yes, miss.

[Exit door R.]

LUCY. Thanks. I can't face the night by myself. I get the horrors. And then I double the dose. Oh, if once I get out of this mess——

ELINOR. Yes. We must hush it up.

LUCY. You'll help me, old girl?

ELINOR. You know I will.

[Kissing her very affectionately.]

LUCY. The first thing is money—money—money.

ELINOR. Yes. It will have to be done——

LUCY. What?

ELINOR. Mother's things. My locket and cross, and your rings.

LUCY. My rings have gone—long ago.

ELINOR. Lucy! No, I won't reproach you. Mine must go. They ought to fetch a hundred and fifty pounds. That will tide us over a little. Then you must get away somewhere till it's over.

LUCY. You'll come with me?

ELINOR. Yes; but you can stay on here for the next two months.

LUCY. No; it wouldn't be safe. Gibbard might suspect. I daren't run any risks.

ELINOR. Well, I'll come to you in January, directly after the County Ball.

LUCY. Couldn't you get out of that?

ELINOR. No; I've promised. And I want to be here at the Abbey all the time till then.

LUCY. I can't face it by myself for two months. You must be with me, Nell. You must! There's nobody else.

ELINOR. I'll come and see you whenever I can. And I'll write to you every day.

LUCY. It's the nights—the dreadful nights—you don't know—I shall go mad. Nell, you might give up the County Ball.

ELINOR. Surely you don't grudge me that. It's the one little thing all this year. You know I'd do anything for you—everything. I did give up Aunt Kate and London.

LUCY. And then there's the expense of it. Your

evening dress and so on. A hundred and fifty pounds won't go far—it won't carry us over this.

ELINOR. It must, somehow. I can't give up the County Ball. Don't ask me.

LUCY. Very well. If you don't come with me, you won't see me alive again after I leave here.

ELINOR. Lucy! That's cowardly! That's wicked!

LUCY. I know it is! But I can't help it. You don't realize—you don't know how I'm tempted every night to end it. I'm desperate. I can't trust myself. Nell, I'm not threatening. If you don't come away with me, I shall do it some night. I know I shall.

ELINOR. Lucy!

LUCY. Won't you do it for me, Nell? I'd do it for you. If you don't, it will be the last thing I shall ever ask of you. You'll be sorry afterward that you refused. Nell, mother would wish you to help me. You know she would.

ELINOR. [*After a very long pause, says very quietly.*] Very well. I'll do it.

LUCY. [*Hugs her heartily.*] Nell, you are an angel! I'll never forget it. Never!

ELINOR. Now we must make our plans.

LUCY. It's the money.

ELINOR. The Tallertons ought to help you. They're rich enough. Was Sir Thomas very angry?

LUCY. Yes. He almost turned me out of the house.

ELINOR. It must have come as a great shock to them. When they get over it, they'll think better of it. Lucy, I'll go to them.

LUCY. That is good of you.

ELINOR. I'll see Lady Tallerton. They must make some provision for the child.

LUCY. Yes—perhaps they'll listen to you.

ELINOR. They shall. I won't leave them till they do.

LUCY. It must be done at once. They're leaving for Biarritz on Monday.

ELINOR. I'll see them to-morrow. They're at Eastbourne?

LUCY. Yes. And, Nell, I've been thinking Brighton would be the best place for me to stay till it's over.

ELINOR. It's close to Eastbourne—

LUCY. Yes, and we're not likely to meet anyone we know. If we do, it won't be remarked.

ELINOR. Very well. It shall be Brighton.

LUCY. I've thought it all out. I must go as a married woman. My husband is in India, and he has sent me home. We shall have to change our names, both of us, and take different ones—

ELINOR. I shall hate that.

LUCY. It has got to be done.

ELINOR. Yes. It's no use shirking. We'll get away to-morrow.

LUCY. What shall we tell Grandy? That someone is at Brighton who will be a good match for me! Yes, and you must come at once and chaperon me.

ELINOR. Yes, that will do. And, afterwards—someone must take care of the child.

LUCY. That won't be difficult.

ELINOR. We needn't meet that till it comes. Well, we've decided. We'll go to-morrow.

LUCY. Oh, Nell, you are splendid! I'll never forget your kindness! [*Kissing her heartily.*]

ELINOR. Cheer up, old girl! I'll see you through it.

LUCY. I begin to feel the worst is over, now I'm with

you. It will be hushed up, and I shall make a good marriage by and by, shan't I?

ELINOR. Yes, dear!

[Enter SIR ROBERT R. *He has been drinking, and, without being tipsy, is stupidly jovial.*

SIR ROBERT. [Seeing LUCY.] Hillo! Heigh! Heigh! Heigh! What's this? Lucy! Well, well, well! This is a surprise! [Kissing her.] Come to stay with us and brighten the place up?

LUCY. No, Grandy. I've just run down for the night.

SIR ROBERT. Nonsense! Shan't let you go! Nell, I've been thinking it over. We'll give a big dinner party, and we'll ask young Forster and Lady Betchworth, and all the rest of the upstarts! We'll let them see the Shales aren't played out yet. Lucy, you've come down just in time.

LUCY. No, Grandy. I must run away again tomorrow.

SIR ROBERT. Shan't hear of it! Shan't hear of it! Let's take a good look at you! [Admiring her dress.] Nell, that's the way to dress! She'll go off before you. She knows the way to get a husband! I'm proud of you! You're a credit to the old family.

[Drawing her to him and kissing her again.

LUCY submits with evident reluctance, and disengages herself.

LUCY. I'll run upstairs and take my things off. Come up to me as soon as you can, Nell.

[Exit by stairs L.

SIR ROBERT. She's a credit to the family. And, by Jove! We'll keep her here, now we've got her.

ELINOR. Grandy, I'm going to take Lucy to Brighton to-morrow.

SIR ROBERT. Brighton? Brighton? Brighton? What for?

ELINOR. There's a chance of her making a good match there.

SIR ROBERT. Good match! Heigh! Heigh! Heigh! I knew she would! She knows how to manage it.

[HAMP enters R. with a decanter of port wine and wine glasses.

HAMP. I thought you'd like to sample this before dinner, Sir Robert.

SIR ROBERT. Right. Give me a glass. Good match, eh? We'll drink to Lucy's good match.

[Enter MISS PINSENT L., with an open letter in her hand.

MISS PINSENT. Will you see if this is right before I post it? [Offering letter to ELINOR.

ELINOR. I've had to change my plans, Miss Pinsent. I shan't need an evening dress.

MISS PINSENT. Not need——?

ELINOR. I'm not going to the ball. I've had an invitation to stay with some friends. I must get my dresses there.

MISS PINSENT. Then I needn't send this?

ELINOR. No—please don't.

[Exit MISS PINSENT L., a little perplexed.

HAMP has poured out two glasses of wine.

SIR ROBERT. Take a glass of this, Nell, and drink to Lucy's good match.

ELINOR. No, thank you.

SIR ROBERT. You won't?

ELINOR. [More firmly.] No, thank you!

SIR ROBERT. [*Offended.*] Oh, very well! Hamp, you know a glass of good wine. What's your opinion of that?

[HAMP takes a glass, SIR ROBERT takes up the other.

HAMP. [*Drinking.*] A very nice rich silky wine, Sir Robert.

SIR ROBERT. To Lucy's good match! And "Go thou and do likewise!" [*Drinking.*

[ELINOR takes no notice. She has remained standing. She hardens her face, to prevent the tears. She just turns, and sees the pattern of rich dress material, her hand falls on it, she turns away her head.

CURTAIN

[Two and a half years pass between Acts I and II.]

ACT II

SCENE: *The same. It is now afternoon in early summer, with bright sunshine coming through the open windows. The landscape outside is in June sunshine. Discover SIR ROBERT, HAMP, and GIBBARD. SIR ROBERT is rather older and shabbier than in the first act. He has on a pair of very old shabby boots covered with dust. HAMP also has suffered some deterioration. GIBBARD is still untidy in a morning dress.*

SIR ROBERT. I don't believe it——

HAMP. Gibbard will bear me out in every word I say.

SIR ROBERT. But I'm not asking Gibbard to clean my boots——

[Holding out his foot.]

HAMP. No, Sir Robert. But if Gibbard has got to wait hand and foot on Miss Lucy it stands to reason everything goes wrong all over the house.

GIBBARD. She wants twenty times as much done for her as Miss Elinor.

HAMP. And what's the result? Who's the first to suffer for it? You are, Sir Robert.

SIR ROBERT. Suffer? By Jove, I do suffer!

HAMP. We all have to suffer, both in mind, body, and estate.

GIBBARD. I should have left the week after she came, only Miss Elinor persuaded me to stay.

HAMP. The old place hasn't been the same since she came. I often ask myself this question: "What's going to happen next?"

SIR ROBERT. My boots are going to get cleaned. That's what is going to happen next, or I'll know the reason why.

[LUCY has entered L., very well dressed.]

LUCY. What's the matter?

SIR ROBERT. Everything's the matter. My guns are never cleaned. My clothes are never brushed. Elinor says that Forster and his friend may be dropping in, at any moment. That's a pretty pair of boots for a Shale of Shale Abbey to be seen in, isn't it?

HAMP. I'll go and see if anything can be done, Sir Robert.

SIR ROBERT. There's my old hunting kit—turn out the whole lot—boots and breeches and waistcoats and all—we'll see if we can't get a decent rig out among them.

HAMP. I will, Sir Robert. [Exit HAMP L.]

LUCY. Gibbard, my room hasn't been tidied—

GIBBARD. If you want your room tidied, you'll have to do it yourself. I've told Sir Robert, and I'm going to tell Miss Elinor. [Exit GIBBARD R.]

LUCY. Oh, these everlasting servants! And this everlasting mess! Grandy, I've had just about enough of this!

SIR ROBERT. So have I.

LUCY. I mean to get out of it.

SIR ROBERT. So do I. But I'm hanged if I see how.

LUCY. There's only one way: I must make a good marriage.

SIR ROBERT. Well, why don't you? You were away

at Brighton six months. Why didn't you pull it off then?

LUCY. I told you—the man died.

SIR ROBERT. Well, you've been going about to different places ever since.

LUCY. I haven't met with anybody suitable. That's the reason I came back to the Abbey.

SIR ROBERT. Not much chance for you here.

LUCY. [*After a little pause.*] Grandy, I think Mr. Forster likes me.

SIR ROBERT. Likes you? Whenever he comes, he seems to hang about Elinor.

LUCY. Nell's the elder, and of course he pays her the most attention—outwardly.

SIR ROBERT. Well, Elinor or you, so long as he makes up his mind. But he has been home two months now, and he doesn't seem to come to the scratch.

LUCY. I don't wonder he holds back, seeing us in this wretched state.

SIR ROBERT. He's like the rest of the young men in these days. One of them holds back—and the other dies—there's no chivalry left in the country.

LUCY. Grandy, I've got a plan. I've thought it all out. You must help me, and then I can help you and Elinor.

SIR ROBERT. Go on, my dear. What's your plan?

LUCY. If Mr. Forster stays on at the Hall, we must have an entire change here, get some new servants, and take our place in the country again.

SIR ROBERT. That's what I've been saying for years. But where's the money to come from?

LUCY. I can manage a little, perhaps——

SIR ROBERT. You? Where from?

LUCY. Never mind. I can manage a hundred or two, and for the rest we mustn't be afraid to launch out.

SIR ROBERT. Launch out? Just what I've always told Elinor. Launch out!

LUCY. By the time we have to pay people, I hope I shall be safely married to Mr. Forster.

SIR ROBERT. Good! Good! That's a splendid plan! It will take a bit of managing, eh?

LUCY. Yes; I shall have to be rather "nippy." We must find out Mr. Forster's plans. If he's going back to Egypt, I must get out to Cairo for the winter.

SIR ROBERT. Yes. Capital! Capital! And what's to become of me?

LUCY. I shall take care of you and Elinor. We must try to let the Abbey—there's this friend of Mr. Forster's who's coming to look it over.

SIR ROBERT. Yes. Elinor says he may drop in any afternoon. She has just been badgering me to trim myself up a bit.

[*Looking at his clothes and showing his boots.*]

LUCY. If we could only get this Mr.—Dibdin, isn't it—to take the Abbey.

SIR ROBERT. Ah! There's another crying shame.

LUCY. What?

SIR ROBERT. This Dibdin with his "Gift of Health"; makes a fortune out of his quack medicine stuff, and then comes and takes Shale Abbey over our heads.

LUCY. He hasn't taken Shale Abbey. Let's hope he will. And he didn't make the fortune. His grandfather made it for him.

SIR ROBERT. Yes; and [*solemnly*] thank God,

LUCY, your grandfather isn't that stamp! I didn't make a fortune out of a beastly thirteen penny-half-penny mixture! And what's the consequence? I've got to slouch about the place like a broken-down game keeper. Look at those boots! That's what England does for her sons.

LUCY. She'll have to do a little better than that for one of her daughters. Now, Grandy, if this Mr. Dibdin takes the Abbey, we must make it a condition that he does up the Dower House for you and Elinor.

SIR ROBERT. That's a good idea. By Jove, yes—I must have somewhere to spend my old age in! Yes, and do it up comfortably, too!

LUCY. Now, Grandy, you must do all you can to get me married to Mr. Forster.

SIR ROBERT. Yes—what?

LUCY. [*Fondling him.*] You might mention to him what a bright, helpful little creature I am about the house, and how thoughtful and kind I am to you and Elinor.

SIR ROBERT. Yes, yes, I will! I'll lay it on thick.

LUCY. No, not too thick. Though it's quite true. You know, Grandy, if I do marry Mr. Forster, I mean to be a real fairy godmother to you and Elinor.

SIR ROBERT. Yes, of course you can—a real fairy godmother.

LUCY. And, Grandy, don't say anything to Elinor about Mr. Forster and me, except that you think he likes me— Hush!

[*ELINOR enters R. She is plainly dressed, not as well as LUCY.*]

ELINOR. Lucy, what have you been saying to Gibbard? She has given me notice.

LUCY. That's a relief.

ELINOR. Relief! Gibbard is our only stand-by. If she goes, we shall have to turn charwomen.

SIR ROBERT. By Jove, yes—— [*Looking at his clothes.*] I only want an apron and a pair of clogs to make a perfect picture of me.

LUCY. Hamp had better go with her.

ELINOR. But we owe them wages.

LUCY. We must pay them.

ELINOR. There's more than a year due to Gibbard.

LUCY. And Hamp?

ELINOR. I don't know. It's so long since we settled his account.

SIR ROBERT. Hamp settles his account as he goes along—in liquor.

LUCY. Then I should think he's a good many years on the right side.

SIR ROBERT. He takes good care of that. He had more than half that last dozen of whiskey.

[*Enter HAMP L.*

HAMP. I've laid them all out, Sir Robert. I think you'll manage a tidyish turnout among 'em. There's three or four very showy wescots.

SIR ROBERT. Waistcoats! It's the confounded boots that never will turn up.

HAMP. There's the pair of big felt shoes, Sir Robert, that you wore when you had the gout.

SIR ROBERT. Let's have a look at them.

[*Exit HAMP L.*

SIR ROBERT. I'll go and see what I can do in the way of a rig-out. [*To LUCY.*] You talk to Elinor. Make her see we've got to launch out.

[*Exit SIR ROBERT L.*

ELINOR. Launch out?

LUCY. Yes, you dear old thing! We've got to make a fight now, or go under forever.

ELINOR. If I hadn't made a fight, we should have gone under long ago.

LUCY. Well, pull yourself together, old girl, for one final struggle. We must have some new servants. I'm glad Gibbard is going——

ELINOR. She isn't. I've made her promise to stay.

LUCY. That's a pity. We must get a new smart parlor maid and butler.

ELINOR. Where's the money to come from?

LUCY. Perhaps this Mr. Dibdin may take the Abbey. If not, we must draw on my four hundred a year.

ELINOR. We have drawn on it. The next year is already gone.

LUCY. The Tallertons must pay another year in advance.

ELINOR. You know they won't. Sir Thomas said he'd never do it again.

LUCY. He must do it. It's for his own grandson. Nell, won't you write him a very nice letter and say that Dick is growing, and we want to bring him up as he would wish—for his father's sake—you know how to put it.

ELINOR. I can't do it, Lucy. It isn't fair to the Tallertons. They've behaved very generously.

LUCY. Generously! Four hundred a year! My boy would have had his twenty thousand a year if his father had lived a month longer. The cursed luck of it!

ELINOR. It's no use dwelling on that. It's lucky you've come out of it so well, and without anyone sus-

pecting. You're clear now for the future—except for Dick.

LUCY. Except for Dick.

ELINOR. You don't wish now that he hadn't come?

LUCY. No, no! He is a dear, isn't he?

ELINOR. Yes. Lucy, I wish we could have him here sometimes.

LUCY. Have him here?

ELINOR. Mrs. Callard could take rooms at Waventry and bring him over.

LUCY. It wouldn't be safe.

ELINOR. Nobody knows he isn't her child. We can trust her thoroughly. I long to see him again.

LUCY. And don't you think I do? I'm going to Brighton the first chance I get.

ELINOR. Yes. I'll come with you.

LUCY. [*Jealously.*] Nell, you mustn't steal his heart away from me.

ELINOR. You know I wouldn't do that.

LUCY. I'll go to Brighton next week. We mustn't risk bringing him here. I must be careful. Especially just now.

ELINOR. Why just now?

LUCY. [*Watching ELINOR very closely.*] Nell, you haven't noticed—or guessed anything?

ELINOR. No. What?

LUCY. I wouldn't mention it to anyone but you. [*Throwing her arms around ELINOR'S neck.*] Nell, I believe Mr. Forster likes me. [*ELINOR rises, startled, she withdraws from LUCY'S embrace.*] You haven't noticed?

ELINOR. No. What makes you think that?

LUCY. Only his manner when I'm alone with him.

ELINOR. Have you been much alone with him?

LUCY. Several times. Why do you question me in that tone?

ELINOR. Nothing. Has he said anything to you?

LUCY. Not directly. But of course a woman always guesses——

ELINOR. And you guess—— What makes you guess?

LUCY. Nell, you aren't jealous?

ELINOR. No. But you remember what I told you about the County Ball?

LUCY. That was over two years ago. Has he said anything to you since he came home?

ELINOR. He hasn't actually spoken, but—— Oh, don't let's say anything more about it!

LUCY. Of course, darling, if it is really you, I should be pleased for your sake—though—— [*Beginning to cry.*] I really have grown to love him, Nell. I can't help it—but I do. And you always said that if a man really loved me he would forgive.

ELINOR. He can't very well forgive unless he knows.

LUCY. Of course I shall tell him. Nell, you'll never breathe a word to him?

ELINOR. You can ask me that?

LUCY. No, of course not. We'll say no more. We may both be mistaken. He's not likely to think much of either of us while we're in this muddle. For both our sakes, we must do up this hole, and get some smart servants.

ELINOR. We mustn't go any further into debt. You haven't sent Mrs. Callard the last month's payment for Dick.

LUCY. Oh, don't keep on nagging me about that.

You might remember that it's my four hundred a year that keeps us going——

ELINOR. I don't forget. But we are so terribly in debt.

LUCY. So's everybody else that I've ever met. You dear old thing, you are so hopelessly old fashioned, so hopelessly out of it!

ELINOR. [*With quiet bitterness.*] I wasn't out of it when I went to Brighton with you, and begged Sir Thomas to make some provision for you, and never left him till I got it. I wasn't out of it then.

LUCY. No, you darling! [*Again embracing her.*] And I shall never forget it.

[*Enter GIBBARD R., with a note on tray.*]

GIBBARD. Mr. Forster's showfer has brought this for you. [*Handing note.*]

ELINOR. Mr. Forster's chauffeur? [*Opening note.*]

GIBBARD. Mr. Forster and another gentleman have just motored up, miss. They're at the Dower House.

ELINOR. [*Having glanced at note.*] Ask the chauffeur to say we shall be pleased to see Mr. Forster and Mr. Dibdin. And tell Sir Robert that Mr. Forster is here.

GIBBARD. Yes, miss.

ELINOR. Then please come back to me.

GIBBARD. Yes, miss. [*Exit R.*]

LUCY. Then they're here!

ELINOR. Yes. Of course they've come to look over the house the very day everything is upset.

LUCY. And I'm looking such a fright. I must change my dress.

[*Enter SIR ROBERT. He has changed his dress. He wears light-colored thick tweed*]

*trousers, an old fancy hunting waistcoat,
and an old black velvet dinner jacket.
He has put on the black felt shoes, which
are much too large.*

SIR ROBERT. I see Forster has just motored past the lodge.

ELINOR. Yes; he and his friend are at the Dower House. [*To LUCY, who is going off.*] Lucy, you'll help us get the place straight.

LUCY. Yes. I'll see to my own room.

[*Exit at door L.*]

SIR ROBERT. [*Exhibiting himself to ELINOR.*] Well, how's this? Not so bad, eh? Except the damned shoes!

ELINOR. You do look a perfect picture!

SIR ROBERT. Well, it will have to do. Now, Elinor, if this patent-medicine fellow does take a fancy to the place, he'll have to pay a biggish rent, and he'll have to do up the Dower House for us to live in.

ELINOR. Let's be thankful if we can get a fair rent.

SIR ROBERT. Fair rent! For Shale Abbey! With all its associations. And to a confounded thirteen penny-ha'penny mixture man!

ELINOR. Mr. Dibdin is an Oxford man, and I suppose he is a gentleman.

SIR ROBERT. It takes three generations to make a gentleman. It took twenty generations to make us.

ELINOR. What a waste of time! [*Enter HAMP L.*]

ELINOR. Hamp, a gentleman is coming to look over the Abbey. We must make haste and get it tidy.

HAMP. There's no time for that, miss. The gentlemen are now coming up the lawn.

ELINOR. [*Looking out of window.*] Yes. Grandy,

go out and meet them, and keep them talking until we can get the place straight. [*Glancing out of window.*] Make haste! They're coming!

SIR ROBERT. [*Hurries to door, stops, looks down at his shoes, is struck with an idea.*] Where's that old big stick of mine? I think I'll have the gout again.

[*Hurries off.*

ELINOR. Now, Hamp, please help me. This Mr. Dibdin may take the Abbey.

HAMP. And what's to become of the family?

ELINOR. We shall get another house, and take you with us. Now please go upstairs and see that Sir Robert's room is tidy.

HAMP. It will be a rush. But I'll put my shoulders to the wheel.

ELINOR. Oh, do, for once! [*Exit HAMP L.*

[*GERALD FORSTER strolls up to the window, outside.*

GERALD. [*Through the window.*] How d'ye do?

ELINOR. [*Shakes GERALD's hand.*] How d'ye do?

GERALD. May I come in?

ELINOR. Yes; do.

[*GERALD disappears from window. Left alone, ELINOR puts one or two things straight about the room, then stands in pleased expectancy looking at the door. GERALD enters right.*

GERALD. [*Shaking hands.*] I hope our call is quite convenient.

ELINOR. Oh, quite!

GERALD. I've left my friend, Noll Dibdin, looking around the Dower House with Sir Robert.

ELINOR. I hope Mr. Dibdin will take a fancy to the Abbey.

GERALD. Noll's rather a casual, uncertain fellow. Nobody knows exactly who or what he will take a fancy to. But I hope he'll settle down here close to me.

ELINOR. Then you do think of settling down at the Hall?

GERALD. I should like to. But the Government is pressing me to go back to Egypt and look after the construction of the other dam.

ELINOR. You've done some splendid work out there, the papers say.

GERALD. Do they? I'm fond of the work. I want to see it through, so that when it's finished I can say: "That was my little job on the face of the earth. I've done it, and, by Jove, I've done it rather well!"

ELINOR. But the papers said the dam was finished and working magnificently.

GERALD. That was the big job with all the kudos to it. This other is going to be a nasty, ticklish business, which may plague us for years, and then beat us in the end. But I can't bear the thought of letting it beat me. Do you think I ought to go out?

ELINOR. [*Her face lighting up with pleasure.*] I? How can I tell? Do you think you ought to go?

GERALD. Yes, I ought.

ELINOR. Then go.

GERALD. But I ought to stay here in England.

ELINOR. Then stay.

GERALD. There's my estate here—I've had to neglect it all these years. [*Approaching her tenderly.*] Shall I stay?

ELINOR. Why do you ask me?

GERALD. I won't for the moment. I'll ask you something else. Why didn't you keep your promise to me to come to the County Ball?

ELINOR. I wrote you. The moment after you left me that day I received a pressing invitation to go to some people——

GERALD. In England? I've no right to ask——

ELINOR. It was at Brighton.

GERALD. Was it so very pressing?

ELINOR. Yes. I was obliged to go.

GERALD. But if you were at Brighton, you could surely have come home for the ball.

ELINOR. [*Embarrassed.*] I couldn't get away just then. I should have written to you again, but I saw in the papers you'd gone back to Egypt.

GERALD. I was only staying in England because you'd promised to come to the County Ball. When you wrote me you couldn't come, I left for Egypt the next day.

ELINOR. You must have thought it very strange of me.

GERALD. I did. I should have come back last year to ask you the reason, and to ask you another question. But I was nailed to my work, and I didn't know whether——

ELINOR. Whether——?

GERALD. [*Very tenderly.*] Whether it would be any use——my coming. Would it have been?

[*Voices of SIR ROBERT and NOLL DIBDIN heard outside.*]

SIR ROBERT. [*Opening door R.*] We shall find them in here, I expect.

[OLIVER DIBDIN enters. NOLL DIBDIN is rather over thirty, with humorous, irregular features and a careless, mocking manner; well dressed in a slovenly way; very careless and easy-going. SIR ROBERT hobbles after him with a stick and a pretended attack of gout.

SIR ROBERT. This is my granddaughter, Elinor. Mr. Dibdin, my dear.

ELINOR. [*Coming forward, offering hand.*] How d'ye do?

NOLL. [*As he comes forward, has a start of recognition and a momentary hesitation, which ELINOR and GERALD notice.*] Excuse me. [*Shaking hands.*] For the moment I thought we had met.

ELINOR. [*Looking at him frankly.*] I don't think so.

NOLL. No, I see I was mistaken.

[*At times during the scene he steals a furtive look at her.*

SIR ROBERT. [*Hobbling on his stick.*] This is the drawing-room—used to be part of the old hall. It's like all the rest of the place, tumbling to pieces. We don't attempt to disguise it.

ELINOR. [*To NOLL.*] No. It wouldn't be much use, would it?

SIR ROBERT. But its proportions are noble—very noble. Sit down, Mr. Dibdin. Oh! Oh! Oh!

[*With pretended twinges of gout.*

NOLL. I'm sure your gout is paining you, Sir Robert.

SIR ROBERT. No, no. It's the nuisance of being obliged to shuffle about the place in a pair of shoes like these. [*Has another twinge.*] Oh! This is my legacy from a long line of hard-drinking Shales. They



"You mustn't take the least notice of Dibdin. When he means anything at all, he means just the opposite of what he says."

didn't leave me much else. You've been luckier in the way of legacies than I have, Mr. Dibdin.

NOLL. I wouldn't say that, Sir Robert. My grandfather decimated the English people, mowed them down by their thousands, and swindled them out of three hundred thousand pounds by what he cruelly and satirically called his "Gift of Health."

[ELINOR shows surprise.]

GERALD. [*To her.*] You mustn't take the least notice of Dibdin. When he means anything at all, he means just the opposite of what he says.

NOLL. My dear Gerald, I maintain that Dibdin's "Gift of Health" was the most devastating scourge ever concocted by a patent-medicine quack, who knew nothing of the human machine, and less of the poisonous drugs he was putting into it.

SIR ROBERT. He did very well out of it.

NOLL. Yes, that's the cause of my remorse.

SIR ROBERT. Remorse?

NOLL. I calculate that Dibdin's "Gift of Health" depopulated the British Empire to the extent of a city the size of Bristol. Wouldn't you feel conscience-stricken if you had thoughtlessly accepted a legacy made in that way?

SIR ROBERT. Well, I should certainly feel uncomfortable.

NOLL. It's true that many of those whom we—a—removed probably deserved to be killed. [ELINOR looks at him in astonishment, and turns to GERALD.] And some of them may have gone to a better world.

SIR ROBERT. Let's hope so!

NOLL. Let's hope so! God help 'em if they haven't!

GERALD. [*Explains to ELINOR.*] All this means that

Dibdin is quietly doing no end of good in the world and enjoying himself in doing it.

NOLL. I beg pardon, my dear Gerald, my remorse is quite as excruciating as Sir Robert's gout.

[*Looking fixedly at ELINOR, whom he has been quietly observing all the while.* SIR ROBERT groans.

ELINOR. I hope it doesn't affect your appetite.

NOLL. Happily no. And if I can only get rid of some part of my ill-gotten gains—not too much—say a hundred thousand pounds or so——

ELINOR. That oughtn't to be difficult——

SIR ROBERT. By Jove, no! Are you making any considerable stay down here?

NOLL. I don't know. This might be a nice secluded spot to mature my plans. There's the old English landscape, which my father disfigured with hideous red and yellow advertisements——

SIR ROBERT. They used to be all along our railway line to Waventry.

NOLL. Then I owe the landscape some reparation. One of my pet schemes is to add a little beauty to the countryside by piously restoring some of our old mansions and Abbeys.

SIR ROBERT. That's a good idea! I'm very struck with that. Now, Elinor, can't we take Mr. Dibdin around?

ELINOR. [*With a meaning look at SIR ROBERT.*] Will you show Mr. Dibdin the stables and I'll see if the upstairs rooms are ready?

SIR ROBERT. Yes. And Lucy shall entertain Forster the while. Where is she—where's my little fairy god-mother? I'll see where she is. Lucy!

[*Hurrying to stairs, forgets his stick and his pretended gout; suddenly remembers it, stops, groans; NOLL gives him stick; he hobbles off L. with twinges and groans to the door.*]

ELINOR. I'll see if the upstairs rooms are ready. We want you to see the Abbey at its best.

NOLL. But if I am to take it, I must have it at its worst, so as to give full scope to my mania for pious restoration. I hope you have a haunted chamber.

ELINOR. I'm afraid not. Though the Shale of Henry the Eighth's time was murdered by his cousin in Lucy's room.

NOLL. And he doesn't haunt it? Disown him for an ancestor. Any subterranean passages?

ELINOR. Not a yard of one. And not a single secret panel.

NOLL. [*Shakes his head disapprovingly.*] I wanted an old place with all the medieval apparatus in full creaking order——

ELINOR. If you'll wait a few minutes, I'll try and summon up a few ancient bogies—— [Exit L.]

[NOLL has watched her off, and remains standing.]

GERALD. Why did you watch Miss Shale so closely all the time?

NOLL. Did I? It was very rude of me.

GERALD. You have really met her?

NOLL. No.

GERALD. No?

NOLL. I think not. What does it matter if I have?

GERALD. Then you have? Tell me!

NOLL. It's not worth mentioning.

GERALD. Then why not tell me? [*A longish pause.*]
You won't?

NOLL. Oh, these girls are your neighbours—you'll be constantly meeting them——

GERALD. What of that? Why shouldn't I? You've raised my curiosity. Aren't you going to satisfy it?

NOLL. No.

GERALD. Noll, don't make a mystery of it. Tell me. I ask you as my oldest friend.

NOLL. Two years ago last April I was staying at Brighton with my old friend, Doctor Denby Rodd.

GERALD. Two years ago last April?

NOLL. Yes. Denby Rodd has one of the largest practices in Brighton. He manages my Children's Convalescent Home on the Downs. When we were on the front one day, we met a rather striking girl.

GERALD. Miss Shale?

NOLL. Yes. Rodd stopped to speak to her, and when he came back he said: "That's rather a curious story." I asked him what it was, but he wouldn't tell me. The next day I was coming away, and he saw me off at the station. There was the same girl on the platform.

GERALD. Miss Shale?

NOLL. Yes. He spoke to her again. Apparently she was in some distress. She'd lost her luggage, and a nurse, and a sister, and a baby.

GERALD. Baby?

NOLL. Yes. Rodd went to make inquiries for her. She didn't notice me. Meantime, the sister and nurse and baby came up. They'd got into the wrong train. Rodd put them right, and saw them off. When he came back, he said: "I wonder who they really are?"

GERALD. Didn't he know?

NOLL. No. He said: "Dibdin, if you want to be believed when you're telling a lie, don't tell it too often, or too emphatically."

GERALD. Telling a lie? Go on.

NOLL. "And if you wish to pass under an assumed name——"

GERALD. Assumed name!

NOLL. "Don't keep on dragging it in." Then he told me that Miss Shale had come to him a few months before, and told him that his services would be required—for a coming event. She said that she had brought the sister with her, and that the husband was in India. Rodd said he should have believed there was a husband in India, if they hadn't talked so much about him.

[Enter LUCY and SIR ROBERT L. NOLL recognizes LUCY. LUCY is very prettily dressed in a fashionable summer gown which is in marked contrast to ELINOR'S quite plain one.]

SIR ROBERT. *[Hobbling in after LUCY.]* Here she is! Here's my little fairy godmother! *[Introducing.]* Mr. Dibdin—Miss Lucy Shale.

LUCY. *[Shaking hands.]* How d'ye do?

NOLL. How d'ye do?

LUCY. Good afternoon, Mr. Forster.

GERALD. Good afternoon.

SIR ROBERT. Now, Mr. Dibdin, we'll have a look at the stables, if you're ready.

NOLL. Quite.

SIR ROBERT. You'll find them very tumbledown and mouldy—very sad—very sad!

NOLL. Very sad—very sad! Let's keep them from mouldering any further.

SIR ROBERT. Forster, Lucy will look after you—*[patting LUCY on the shoulder]*—my little fairy god-mother!

LUCY. Go away, Grandy. You're always flattering me!

SIR ROBERT. Flattering you! I don't know what the old place would be without you. *[Kissing her.]* Come along, Mr. Dibdin.

[NOLL and SIR ROBERT go off at door R., SIR ROBERT calling NOLL's attention to GERALD and LUCY as he goes off. NOLL is startled by SIR ROBERT's gesture, which indicates an attachment between LUCY and GERALD. Exit NOLL after SIR ROBERT, much concerned.]

LUCY. *[Steals a look at GERALD, who is standing apart, distressed by NOLL's story.]* Grandfather makes himself really foolish over me. And, after all, I simply do my duty to him and Elinor. *[He does not reply as she moves toward him.]* It's such a delight to see a few neighbours sometimes. I hope you're going to stay on at The Hall?

GERALD. *[Absorbed.]* I'm not certain. They're pressing me to go back to Egypt.

LUCY. I've such a longing to see Egypt. You're not much in Cairo, are you?

GERALD. I generally run up for a month or two in the season.

LUCY. I think I must manage to get out next winter. If I do, I want to get right into the heart of the country. I wonder if you could help me?

GERALD. Anything I can do——

LUCY. Thanks. I should like to see all your wonderful engineering works.

GERALD. I'm afraid that's hardly possible for ladies. They're quite away from civilization.

LUCY. Oh, I don't mind roughing it! And when I've made up my mind to do a thing, I always do it. But you're not certain of being in Egypt next winter?

GERALD. My plans are quite unsettled. I'd some thoughts of Brighton—— [LUCY has a scarcely perceptible shock. He is watching her rather closely.] Do you know Brighton?

LUCY. No. Only very slightly.

GERALD. Your sister was telling me she stayed there two years ago.

LUCY. Did she? I don't remember. I was with my Aunt Kate. Perhaps Elinor may have run down there for a day or two. [*Seeing that he is looking at her.*] Ah, yes, I remember; she did go!

GERALD. For a day or two?

LUCY. It may have been longer. [*Getting a little alarmed, and unable to avoid showing it.*] Why are you asking me?

GERALD. I thought perhaps you might have gone with her.

LUCY. No. [*Getting more alarmed.*] Did she tell you I went with her?

GERALD. No. She mentioned it quite casually.

LUCY. I was with my Aunt Kate all that time—— [*Seeing that he is still keenly watching her.*] Is there anything more you wish to know?

GERALD. No. I understood your sister to say that

her visit was very urgent—— I'm very rude—pray forgive me.

[He turns away, and is going off. Her alarm has increased. She follows him.]

LUCY. Mr. Forster—please tell me—you seem to think there is some mystery. What do you know?

GERALD. Miss Shale, forgive my asking again. You did go with your sister to Brighton?

LUCY. You've heard something. Tell me what.

GERALD. I'd rather say no more.

LUCY. No. You must tell me what you know. Yes, please.

GERALD. Two years ago it became necessary for your sister to go to Brighton. It was so, wasn't it? *[LUCY begins to perceive his mistake.]* She told me so herself. Forgive my asking. You did go with her?

LUCY. Yes.

GERALD. And you stayed with her while—till she could come away?

LUCY. Yes; I had to see her through. It was only what any sister would have done, and naturally I did it for Elinor.

GERALD. It was kind of you.

LUCY. Now you see why I was so frightened when you began to question me. Who told you?

GERALD. I mustn't say.

LUCY. There's no chance of its getting known?

GERALD. Not the least. I learned it quite by accident. You may be sure I shall keep it quite secret.

LUCY. You won't let Elinor suspect that you've heard. She'd be so terribly upset if she thought you knew!

GERALD. Yes. Perhaps I'd better not see her.

LUCY. That would be kindest.

GERALD. I'll write her that I have to go back to my work in Egypt.

LUCY. Yes, that would be best. [*He is standing overwhelmed. A pause. She lays her hand affectionately on his arm.*] I'm so sorry for you—so sorry!

GERALD. Thanks. Thank you for what you did for her. [*Shaking her hand.*]

LUCY. It was only my duty. I had to see her through.

GERALD. But it was kind. I'll write her now—and get it over. [*Goes to writing table.*]

LUCY. Yes, that would be best. Here are pens and paper.

[*He sits down to write. She affectionately lays her hand upon his shoulder. He presses it. She goes off R., watching him. Left alone, GERALD writes for a moment; then tears up the letter, sits with his face buried in his hands; begins writing again, stops, rises, comes away, stands overwhelmed; makes a gesture of resolution, goes to table; sits down, writes quickly and resolutely. LUCY appears outside window, watches GERALD writing, withdraws. GERALD finishes and seals his letter. Enter NOLL R.*]

NOLL. Gerald, I oughtn't to have told you what I did just now.

GERALD. Why not?

NOLL. Sir Robert has just been hinting very plainly that you are attached to this girl.

GERALD. You were quite right to tell me.

NOLL. It has hit you pretty hard.

GERALD. I was going to propose to her this afternoon.

NOLL. Can't you forgive her? [GERALD *shakes his head*.] I'm sorry. From what Sir Robert says, you're losing a great treasure. And she's very much in love with you. Gerald——

GERALD. Don't say any more about this, will you? Don't please. There's a good fellow. It's all over. I shall get back to Egypt.

[ELINOR *enters very gaily, downstairs L.*

ELINOR. Now, Mr. Dibdin, I'm quite ready to show you over our old barn. Will you come, Mr. Forster?

GERALD. I'm afraid I can't. I've just thought of an important telegram. I must hurry off to send it.

[SIR ROBERT *enters door R.*

SIR ROBERT. Now, Elinor—now, Mr. Dibdin, we'll show you round upstairs.

NOLL. Ready, Sir Robert.

SIR ROBERT. Come along, Elinor. [To NOLL.] We'll look over my room first.

[*Exit SIR ROBERT and NOLL.*

GERALD. Miss Shale, you were right just now when you said it was my duty to go back to Egypt and finish my work there.

ELINOR. [*Struck by the change in his tone.*] Has anything happened?

GERALD. Nothing, except that I've had a very severe struggle with myself since you left me. I see now that I mustn't follow my inclinations. I mustn't stay in England.

ELINOR. You're going away—soon?

GERALD. As soon as I can arrange. I've scribbled

a line here to explain. I can tear it up now that I've seen you.

ELINOR. No; give it to me.

GERALD. [*Giving letter.*] It only says what I've just told you. Forgive me. Good-bye. [*Exit GERALD R.*]

[*ELINOR opens letter, reads it, cannot understand; her hand drops with letter in it, she stands overwhelmed, reads it again.*]

LUCY creeps on and watches her a moment.

LUCY. [*Speaks very carelessly.*] Nell, what have you been doing to Mr. Forster?

ELINOR. What do you mean?

LUCY. He has rushed off and scarcely said "Good-bye." I couldn't persuade him to stay to tea.

ELINOR. Did you say anything to him about me?

LUCY. No. When?

ELINOR. Just now—when you were in here with him.

LUCY. No. We never mentioned your name. We talked about the weather. I tried to get him on to Egypt, but I could scarcely get a word out of him. Why?

ELINOR. Nothing.

LUCY. Aren't you coming to show Mr. Dibdin over the rooms?

ELINOR. Yes—I'll come in a minute.

[*LUCY goes off slowly L., watching ELINOR.*]

ELINOR again turns to letter.

CURTAIN

[*Three years and four months pass between Acts II and III.*]

ACT III

SCENE: *The drawing-room of the Dower House, Shale Regis. A prettily furnished, modern room in the house which has been seen through the window of the preceding acts. At back is a large window opening onto a flower garden. This window is obviously a recent addition to the house. Beyond the flower garden is the Abbey, which is surrounded by a park landscape in autumn foliage. Down stage R. is a fireplace. Down stage L. is a door. The room shows a marked contrast to the neglect and decay of the Abbey drawing-room. It is tastefully and sufficiently furnished with bright, pretty modern furniture. There are a good many knickknacks about it. It has an air of comfort and prosperity.*

TIME: *About twelve on a late October morning. The windows at back are wide open and a bright morning sun is shining on the garden and the Abbey and the landscape beyond. Discover ELINOR in the garden outside the windows. She is in a pretty morning gown, with gardening hat and gloves. She has a large bouquet of autumn flowers in her apron, and is stooping to cut a large rose on a tree outside the window. Enter GIBBARD with a letter on tray. GIBBARD is neatly*

dressed as a parlour maid. ELINOR enters through window as GIBBARD takes the letter to her. ELINOR puts down her flowers and scissors.

GIBBARD. For you, miss. [*Handing letter.*] A footman has just bicycled over from the Hall with it.

ELINOR. [*Shows a little surprise at the handwriting, opens letter, and glances through it.*] Mr. and Mrs. Forster got down to the Hall last night. They're coming over to lunch.

GIBBARD. Yes, miss.

ELINOR. I'll come out to the cook and give her instructions.

[*SIR ROBERT enters at door. He is now quite smartly dressed as a country gentleman, has the "Times" in his hand, which he puts down.*

GIBBARD. You said Mrs. Callard and her little boy would be here to lunch, miss.

[*SIR ROBERT shows a little vexation.*

ELINOR. [*After a pause of consideration.*] I don't suppose Mrs. Callard will stay to lunch now. I'll tell you later.

GIBBARD. Yes, miss.

[*Exit.*

ELINOR. Lucy and Mr. Forster are down at The Hall. [*Giving SIR ROBERT the letter.*] They're motor-ing over, and are staying to lunch.

SIR ROBERT. Heigh! Heigh! Heigh! My little Lucy at last! Well, it was about time they came to see us.

ELINOR. Yes.

SIR ROBERT. Why, it's over three years now since she left us.

ELINOR. Three years this month.

SIR ROBERT. Clever stroke of hers going off to Egypt as she did and landing Forster.

ELINOR. Very clever.

SIR ROBERT. But she ought to have run down to see her old Grandy before this.

ELINOR. They've had so much to do in Paris and London. And perhaps they didn't want very much to see us.

SIR ROBERT. They must have wanted to see me. If Lucy hasn't been down, it must be on your account.

ELINOR. Perhaps.

SIR ROBERT. [*Turning to the letter.*] She says here: "I hope, old girl, we shall meet as sisters, and love each other as we did in the old times." What does she mean by that?

ELINOR. What she says, I suppose.

SIR ROBERT. You haven't shown a nice spirit to your sister since she married Forster.

ELINOR. Haven't I?

SIR ROBERT. No; and she's always sending you presents. That fur coat last winter, and the necklace, and the ring on your birthday.

ELINOR. I don't deserve it.

SIR ROBERT. No, you don't—taking her gifts as you do. [*Cunningly.*] She wrote me last week she was sending you a cheque.

ELINOR. Yes.

SIR ROBERT. A good-sized one—eh?

ELINOR. Fifty pounds. I sent it back.

SIR ROBERT. Sent it back? Good heavens! Sent it back!

ELINOR. It's all Mr. Forster's money. We oughtn't



"You haven't shown a nice spirit to your
sister since she married Forster."



to take it. He has done so much for us since he married Lucy.

SIR ROBERT. He can afford it.

ELINOR. I can't afford to take it.

SIR ROBERT. Well, I can. I have my proper pride—no man more so. And no man has more reason for a proper pride. But to send back cheques—and from your own family! That isn't pride. That's damned silly, cantankerous tomfoolery! It's ingratitude—obstinate, pig-headed ingratitude! I shall tell Lucy my opinion of it. And I shall ask her to make her spare cheques payable to me in the future. They won't be wasted on me.

ELINOR. No, they won't!

SIR ROBERT. [*Angrily.*] No, they won't. The truth is you're jealous of Lucy's marrying Forster.

ELINOR. No, not jealous.

SIR ROBERT. Then what's the reason of your behaving as you are doing?

ELINOR. I've always written kindly to her. But I didn't like her going off to Egypt without letting us know. And then saying nothing about her engagement to Mr. Forster—simply writing to tell us they were married.

SIR ROBERT. A very sensible thing to do. And very lucky for us. Here we are in clover—comparatively. We ought to be thankful to Lucy and to Providence.

ELINOR. I'm thankful to Mr. Forster—and to Mr. Diddin for keeping us out of the workhouse.

SIR ROBERT. And aren't you thankful to Lucy?

ELINOR. When she comes this morning, I shall forget there has been any coolness between us, and be quite friendly and sisterly to her.

SIR ROBERT. That's the right tone. We'll have a jolly little lunch. Gibbard said that Mrs. Callard and her child are coming. Why do you keep on inviting that woman here?

ELINOR. I don't keep on inviting her.

SIR ROBERT. She's been hanging about the place for the last month. And the same last year.

ELINOR. Mrs. Callard was staying in the same house at Brighton when Lucy and I were there five years ago. Her baby was just born, and Lucy and I took a fancy to him. Last year she came to stay for a week in lodgings at Waventry. Naturally, I went to see her, and asked her here. The boy's a dear little fellow.

SIR ROBERT. They won't be staying to-day, I hope?

ELINOR. Not unless Lucy wishes. She was fond of the boy when he was a baby, and she might like to see him again.

SIR ROBERT. Lucy has got her own child, and she won't want to be bothered with Mrs. Callard's. I think I'll ask Dibdin to lunch.

ELINOR. It would please Mr. Forster.

SIR ROBERT. In her letter to me last week, Lucy hinted something about a motor for us. I'm getting Dibdin to put up a new garage——

ELINOR. [*Firmly.*] No, Grandy, no——

SIR ROBERT. Why not?

ELINOR. We've imposed too much upon Mr. Dibdin.

SIR ROBERT. Imposed? He's my tenant, isn't he? We had to turn out of the Abbey to make way for him. A thirteen-penny-ha'penny-mixture man! Comes and takes an historic old place like Shale Abbey, drops in for all its associations, takes his place in the county,

and he isn't to be allowed to put up a motor garage for the owner he has turned out!

ELINOR. He's always doing things you ask him. See how beautifully he has done up this house for us.

SIR ROBERT. Well, it was in the agreement. Still, I must say Dibdin has behaved very well.

ELINOR. He has, indeed.

SIR ROBERT. And when I suggested to him last night about the motor house and said you'd like it——

ELINOR. You said I would like it?

SIR ROBERT. He jumped at the idea. He's only too pleased to do anything for you.

ELINOR. Grandy, please stop that.

SIR ROBERT. Stop it? You're a fool, Elinor. You might be Mrs. Dibdin and mistress of Shale Abbey to-morrow—if you wished.

ELINOR. I don't wish. And I don't intend Mr. Dibdin shall spend any more of his money on us.

SIR ROBERT. [*Makes a gesture of irritation.*] Well, thank God Lucy's coming back to put us all to rights!

[NOLL appears in garden just outside window.]

NOLL. Good morning.

SIR ROBERT. Good morning, Dibdin. Come in.

NOLL. [*Entering through window.*] Good morning, Miss Shale.

ELINOR. [*Shaking hands.*]. Good morning.

NOLL. I've just had a note from Gerald. Mrs. Forster and he are down at The Hall.

SIR ROBERT. Yes; they're coming to lunch. You'd better join us.

NOLL. Delighted!

SIR ROBERT. This is my little fairy godmother's home-coming after all these years. And I must give

her a real royal Shale welcome. Elinor, tell cook to give us something decent for lunch for once.

ELINOR. I'll go and see about it. [*To NOLL, who sees her to door.*] So glad you're staying! [*Exit.*]

SIR ROBERT. And I'll give you a bottle of port. Ah! It was port that made the old true breed of Englishmen——

NOLL. Gave them that rich, full-blooded mellowness of tone, eh?

SIR ROBERT. And what are we to-day?

NOLL. A sorry race, I fear, Sir Robert! A sorry, scurvy lot!

SIR ROBERT. We're a parcel of damned twopenny-ha'penny anemic clerks and typists and counterskippers! We can't drink. We can't swear! We can't wench like gentlemen!

NOLL. That's democracy. Takes away all our pleasures and gives us the vote.

SIR ROBERT. You've hit it. I'm glad to find, Diddin, that as my tenant and neighbour you are adopting my views. It's a great responsibility to enter upon the traditions of Shale Abbey.

NOLL. I feel it! I feel it! What's the state of the country this morning?

SIR ROBERT. [*Indignant.*] State of the country? [*Taking up the "Times."*] Have you seen the paper?

NOLL. No. Everybody striking, as usual, I suppose?

SIR ROBERT. Yes. It's the confounded hair-dressers now. Nobody has been shaved in London for three days.

NOLL. That's another score for the lower classes. They've always sported a three days' growth.

SIR ROBERT. But let them go on! Let them go on—till the smash comes!

NOLL. That's what I'm waiting for—the smash!

SIR ROBERT. It's coming—it's coming. I shan't live to see it——

NOLL. Don't say that, Sir Robert. We must hurry things up.

SIR ROBERT. No. I shan't live to see it. But you will.

NOLL. If there's going to be an infernal scrimmage, I want to be there. And at the nearest point of view that's free from danger.

SIR ROBERT. Yes; it's coming! It's coming! Have you thought any more of the motor house you kindly promised to put up?

NOLL. Yes; we must get out the plans.

SIR ROBERT. Thanks! Elinor is delighted at the idea.

NOLL. We must consult Miss Shale.

SIR ROBERT. No. We'll get her away for a few weeks, and have it all done as a pleasant surprise for her when she comes back, eh? Eh?

NOLL. Yes; that's a good thought——

SIR ROBERT. Shush! [*As ELINOR enters.*] Well, dear, what's cook going to give us?

ELINOR. Trout—shoulder of mutton——

SIR ROBERT. [*Disgusted.*] Shoulder of mutton.

ELINOR. Partridges—and an omelette!

SIR ROBERT. Her omelettes are like paving stones.

ELINOR. Then be thankful you have a good digestion. Oh, Mr. Dibdin, Grandy tells me he has been speaking to you about a motor house. [SIR ROBERT

frowns and makes signs at her.] I hope you won't think of it——

NOLL. I'm seeing about the plans.

ELINOR. Please not. I beg you won't waste any more money on us.

SIR ROBERT. Waste! Waste! There's ingratitude! Waste!

ELINOR. We haven't a motor. We can't afford one. It must be waste to put up a motor house.

NOLL. The motor will come by force of attraction. Meantime, you must allow me to put up the motor house; not in a spirit of waste, but as a monument of contrition.

ELINOR. Contrition for what?

NOLL. The misdeeds of my ancestor. [*With a glance at Sir Robert.*] Sir Robert tells me that Dibdin's "Gift of Health" was extensively used in his nursery.

SIR ROBERT. It was always knocking about the place. Done up in—a paper wrapping, with a thirteen-penny-ha'penny label.

NOLL. Two and nine, Sir Robert. Two and nine-pence was the lowest figure at which my old swindler of a grandfather would permit the British public to poison themselves. [*Enter GIBBARD L.*

GIBBARD. If you please, Sir Robert, what wine will you have for lunch?

SIR ROBERT. We must have some champagne for my little fairy godmother. And a bottle of port for you and me, Dibdin. I'll come and get it out, Gibbard.

[*Exit GIBBARD L.*

SIR ROBERT. Really, Elinor, now we've taken up our position again in the county, we must get a butler.

[*Exit SIR ROBERT L.*

ELINOR. [*Sits.*] Mr. Dibdin, we really can't impose upon you any more.

NOLL. What's the meaning of "impose"?

ELINOR. To take money and gifts as we are doing from you—without any right.

NOLL. What's the meaning of "right"?

ELINOR. You know very well what I mean.

NOLL. You mean you have no moral right to my money? Neither have I. But I do take it all the same, because I can't find out whom it belongs to, and because I'm the most deserving man I know. And I'm sure you're far more deserving than I am.

ELINOR. You never will talk plainly.

NOLL. You wish me? Very well. There's only one way in which you could have a legal right to share my ill-gotten gains. Won't you choose that way and—be my wife?

ELINOR. [*Moving away from him.*] I can't.

NOLL. You're sure? I'm talking quite sincerely now.

ELINOR. I can't. It's quite impossible.

NOLL. I guessed so. That's the reason I haven't asked you before. Forget it, and let us go on as we are.

ELINOR. But you must see it's very embarrassing for me to accept all this—

NOLL. I'm sorry. But you can't expect me to have a heap of money I don't know what to do with and not try to make you happy.

ELINOR. You can't do that.

NOLL. Would you rather I left the Abbey? I'll do as you wish.

ELINOR. I wish you to do what is best for yourself.

You might be doing so much in the world, instead of——

NOLL. Instead of skulking about down here?

ELINOR. Ah, no! I know you are doing a lot of good with your money. I hear of it in so many ways. But oughtn't you to be doing something great?

NOLL. It's only great men who do great things. Except in the newspapers.

ELINOR. But there are so many things a man can do——

NOLL. Help me to do something. I fancy you could make a useful man of me.

ELINOR. Could I?

NOLL. I know you could make me do anything you wish. Won't you take me in hand?

ELINOR. I can't! I wish I could!

NOLL. Pardon me—there's someone else?

ELINOR. There was. And I can't forget—you've been so kind!

NOLL. Don't talk about kindness.

ELINOR. But I must! Why should you come down here and take the Abbey at an extravagant rent, and waste your money on Grandy——

NOLL. If you wish to know why I took the Abbey—I'll tell you. You remember the day I first came over with Gerald——

ELINOR. Yes—very well——

NOLL. When you were showing me round the Abbey I noticed there were tears in your eyes. You made some excuse and ran away. When you came back you tried to look happy and cheerful.

ELINOR. I remember.

NOLL. I had a sudden impulse. I thought I'd take

the Abbey and make you happy. I'm like most men. A woman's tears double me up—and yours were very big ones.

ELINOR. I was very unhappy that day.

NOLL. So now you know why I took the Abbey.

ELINOR. My big tears.

NOLL. Yes; I saw you were fretting about leaving the old place——

ELINOR. Oh, no! I wasn't thinking about the Abbey. I had a very great blow that day——

NOLL. That day? *[Shows surprise.]*

ELINOR. Don't let us speak of it, please. This won't prevent your staying to lunch?

NOLL. No. I want to see Gerald and congratulate him and your sister. I'm glad the match came off, after all.

ELINOR. After all? Why after all?

NOLL. I guessed from something Gerald said that day that he was attached to your sister.

ELINOR. Attached to Lucy?

NOLL. Yes. *[Seeing ELINOR's pained face.]* I thought so. Perhaps I was mistaken. At any rate, your sister has married one of the best fellows in the world.

ELINOR. I never quite understood Mr. Forster.

NOLL. Forgive me—you had a great blow on that day? *[SIR ROBERT looks in at the open window L.]*

SIR ROBERT. Here they are! Just driving through the lodge gates! Elinor, come and welcome our little wanderer. Dibdin, come and help me give them a real Shale welcome. *[Waves his hand and shouts.]* How are you? How are you? *[Goes from window.]*

NOLL. [*Has gone up to window.*] Yes, there they are! [*Waving his hand.*] Are you coming?

ELINOR. I'll come directly.

[*Exit NOLL at window and off L.*

[*ELINOR leaves the flowers, goes toward window, looks off, comes back, stands in the middle of the room, listens.*]

GERALD. [*Voice heard off.*] How d'ye do, Sir Robert? Noll, old fellow, how are you?

[*ELINOR bursts into tears, then resolutely checks herself, wipes her eyes. The greetings outside are meanwhile continued in very cheery tones.*

SIR ROBERT. Ah! my little fairy godmother, how are you?

LUCY. Ah, Grandy!

NOLL. My hearty congratulations, Mrs. Forster. Gerald, old man, delighted to see you.

GERALD. Glad to see you!

SIR ROBERT. I want to show you what Dibdin and I have done with the Abbey.

LUCY. Where's Elinor? [*Enters at window, well dressed in the latest fashion.*] Nell, old girl! [*ELINOR stands silent. LUCY steals a look at her. LUCY's manner throughout conveys uneasiness and dread. She comes up to ELINOR.*] Aren't you pleased to see me?

[*ELINOR draws LUCY to her and kisses her simply.*

ELINOR. I hope you're very happy.

LUCY. Of course I am. You've been crying. What's the matter?

ELINOR. Nothing.

LUCY. [*Looking round.*] You have done up the old place. What a change!

ELINOR. Yes. We're very comfortable here, thanks to you and Mr. Forster and Mr. Dibdin.

LUCY. [*Watching her very keenly.*] Nell, I hope you aren't going to keep it up?

ELINOR. Keep what up?

LUCY. You're angry with me because I married Gerald.

ELINOR. No, not angry. I didn't understand!

LUCY. There's nothing to understand. I suppose you think I planned it all. You're quite mistaken. You know I'd arranged to go out to Egypt. He happened to be in Cairo, and of course I met him a great deal. But before I accepted him I said: "You're quite sure I'm not taking you from Elinor?" And he said: "In any case, I shall never marry your sister." I pressed him again and again. You don't believe me! Is there anything you wish to ask?

ELINOR. On that day—the last afternoon he was here—when you were alone with him—you said nothing about me?

LUCY. Not a word. You asked me that before I left. I give you my sacred word. Don't you believe me?

ELINOR. Yes, I believe you. [*Kisses her cordially.*] Forgive me.

LUCY. Then it's quite made up, and we're friends and sisters as we used to be?

ELINOR. Yes, it's past and forgotten. I'm so glad you're happy!

LUCY. I've brought you a little present. [*Bringing out a little leather jewel case, unpacking it.*] A diamond brooch.

ELINOR. Lucy, you shouldn't!

LUCY. Oh, nonsense! I told you at Brighton that if ever I did get a chance of repaying you, I should do it. Now, haven't I shown how grateful I am?

ELINOR. I don't want all these things——

LUCY. You've got to take this. [*Pinning the brooch on ELINOR's dress.*] It looks gorgeous! And I'll try to manage the motor.

ELINOR. Motor?

LUCY. Grandy has been bothering me for a motor for the last three months. I wrote him that Gerald had done so much that I couldn't ask him for more. But he said it would be such a comfort to you.

ELINOR. Please don't let him have it.

LUCY. Oh, he shan't! I suppose he's as impossible as ever!

ELINOR. Just the same.

LUCY. We shall keep him decently dressed, and that's all we shall do for him. Gerald has behaved most handsomely to him.

ELINOR. Yes. You are lucky.

LUCY. I suppose I am.

ELINOR. You ought to be very happy.

LUCY. I was the first few months. Then there was all that trouble at the dam, and Gerald had to go away——

ELINOR. Naturally!

LUCY. But he shouldn't neglect me. However, it has been all right since the baby came. Gerald adores her.

ELINOR. [*Enviously.*] Oh, you are lucky! Lucy, you've told Mr. Forster about Dick?

LUCY. No, not yet.

ELINOR. Not yet?

LUCY. I shall, when the right time comes.

ELINOR. Wasn't the right time at first?

LUCY. I couldn't tell him when we were going to have a child of our own. And since then it has been impossible.

ELINOR. Aren't you afraid?

LUCY. Of what?

ELINOR. That he might find out——

LUCY. It isn't likely. Unless—— Nell, promise me you'll never breathe a word.

ELINOR. You know I never would.

LUCY. But it might slip out—that's one reason I haven't come down——

ELINOR. What?

LUCY. I've been afraid that when you and Gerald got talking that—without thinking—you might say something.

ELINOR. How could I speak to Mr. Forster about that?

LUCY. No. But—Nell, old girl—just to put you on your guard—promise me you won't mention it——

ELINOR. I promise you. But you ought to tell Mr. Forster at once. [*Suddenly.*] Lucy, I'd quite forgotten—Mrs. Callard and Dick are coming over from Waventry.

LUCY. [*Alarmed.*] Coming here? You wrote me they were going back to Brighton on Saturday.

ELINOR. I had arranged it. But I've been very lonely lately, so I let them stay another week.

LUCY. You should have stopped them coming to-day.

ELINOR. It was too late when your note came. [*Looking.*] They ought to be here.

LUCY. [*Alarmed.*] But Gerald——

ELINOR. I'll send them back before he sees them.

LUCY. Yes. But I want to see Dick. I've only managed to run down to Brighton once since I've been home. How he has grown!

ELINOR. Hasn't he? And he's the dearest little fellow——! Now, haven't I been a mother to him while you've been away?

LUCY. Yes, you have been a dear. But now I'm back there won't be any necessity for you to mother him any longer. I'll go to the station and meet them and stop them from coming up——

[Enter GIBBARD, showing in MRS. CALLARD and DICK. Exit GIBBARD. MRS. CALLARD is a pale-faced woman with prematurely gray-white hair, neatly and quietly dressed in a middle-class fashion. DICK is a lively, handsome boy of five, in a sailor suit. DICK enters first, runs to ELINOR, springs up to her waist, throws his arms round her neck, drags her down to him, hugs her, disarranges her hair. LUCY, having shaken hands with MRS. CALLARD, is enviously watching the embrace between DICK and ELINOR.]

DICK. Miss Shale! Miss Shale! Miss Shale!

[Hugging her.]

ELINOR. Dick! Dick! What are you doing?

DICK. I'm loving you.

ELINOR. Yes; but you mustn't love me like that.
[Disengages herself, arranges her hair, looks at him.]
Yes, you may! *[Snatches him to her, hugging him—]*

he hugs her again.] Look, here's somebody else! Won't you speak to her?

DICK. [*Going to* LUCY.] Oh, yes, I remember you. You came to see me at Brighton.

LUCY. [*Hugging him as* ELINOR *has done.* DICK *doesn't respond, and escapes.*] Won't you love me, too?

DICK. No. You aren't my Miss Shale. You're only her sister.

ELINOR. Now, Dick, we have visitors to-day, so you and mummy must go back to Waventry by the next train. Come along. [*Moving toward door.*

DICK. No! No! No! No! I'm going to stay with you!

[*Jumps on sofa and lies on it, refuses to budge.*

ELINOR. No, dear, you must go at once.

LUCY. Mrs. Callard, please take him. Wait for me just beyond the lodge gates. I'll come to you there and walk to the station with you.

ELINOR. Now, Dick, dear—be a good boy and go with Mummy.

[SIR ROBERT, GERALD, and NOLL *come up to window outside.*

SIR ROBERT. Gerald, I want to show you the improvements I've made in the Dower House. I've thrown out this window——

LUCY. [*In a hurried whisper to* MRS. CALLARD.] Quick! Get him away! I'll come to you——

MRS. CALLARD. Now, Dick, come along with Mummy—— [*Trying to get him toward door.*

[GERALD, NOLL, and SIR ROBERT *enter at window.*

DICK. [*Lying on sofa.*] No; I want my Miss Shale to come——

ELINOR. [*Goes to GERALD.*] How d'ye do?

GERALD. [*Shaking hands.*] How d'ye do?

NOLL. [*To DICK.*] Hullo, little Nipper!

[*Pulling DICK's ear.*]

ELINOR. We're glad you and Lucy have got back from Egypt at last. [*Introducing.*] This is Mrs. Callard and her little boy. Mrs. Callard is an old friend of mine.

MRS. CALLARD. How d'ye do, sir?

[*GERALD bows slightly. He watches ELINOR and DICK keenly.*]

ELINOR. Mrs. Callard is staying at Waventry. You'll just have time to catch your train, Mrs. Callard. Now, Dick!

DICK. No. You told me to come and have lunch with you——

MRS. CALLARD. Now, Dick, you're very naughty!

ELINOR. If you're good and go now, I'll come over to-morrow and buy you—oh, such lots of things! Come along now!

DICK. [*Getting up from sofa.*] Very well. You will come and see me to-morrow?

ELINOR. Yes; I promise you.

MRS. CALLARD. Make a nice bow, Dick, and say "Good morning" to the ladies and gentlemen.

DICK. [*To NOLL.*] Good morning, sir.

[*Shaking hands.*]

NOLL. Good morning, little Nipper!

DICK. [*To GERALD.*] Good morning, sir.

GERALD. Good morning Dick.

[*Strokes his head, looks at ELINOR.*]

DICK. Good morning, Miss Shale.

LUCY. Good morning, dear.

DICK. You will come?

[*Coming to ELINOR, again springs up to her and hugs her. She kisses him and gently puts him away.*]

DICK. [*To SIR ROBERT.*] I shan't say "Good morning" to you. You're a nasty, cross old man. When I come to lunch, you tell me to behave myself——

MRS. CALLARD. Dick! Dick! You naughty boy!

[*Snatches his hand and takes him off at window.*]

SIR ROBERT. [*Stands speechless.*] The young scoundrel! Now that shows how children are brought up nowadays. That's young England!

[*LUCY has watched MRS. CALLARD and DICK off and has gone up to window, looking after MRS. CALLARD and DICK.*]

LUCY. I'm going to have a look round the Abbey and see what you've done to it, Mr. Dibdin.

[*Exit after MRS. CALLARD and DICK.*]

SIR ROBERT. [*Pursuing his theme.*] That's the rising generation—no reverence, no respect for age, no modesty, no chivalry. Well, Gerald, what do you think of the improvements I've made here?

GERALD. Excellent! I shouldn't have known the old place.

SIR ROBERT. I wish we'd got a decent lunch to offer you. But Elinor will have a cheap cook. Now, to-day—shoulder of mutton, and no entrée—— Dibdin, that's a remarkably good *pâté-de-foie-gras* you always give us when we dine with you.

NOLL. I get that from town especially for you, Sir Robert. I've just had in a fresh supply.

SIR ROBERT. I wonder if you'd do me a neighbourly turn, and lend me a pot for to-day's lunch?

NOLL. Certainly.

SIR ROBERT. Lucy has gone over to the Abbey. We might run across and bring her back with the *pâté-de-foie-gras*.

NOLL. Come along! Come along! I've just got down a supply of very fine smoked salmon——

[*Going off.*]

SIR ROBERT. Have you? There's no better relish than smoked salmon. And if you had a stray anchovy or olive, I should be everlastingly obliged——

[*Exit SIR ROBERT and NOLL at window.*]

[*ELINOR and GERALD, left alone, stand silent and a little embarrassed.*]

GERALD. I hope you're thoroughly happy and comfortable here.

ELINOR. Yes. I've written to thank Lucy. Now you must let me thank you.

GERALD. There's no need for that. It was a great pleasure to me.

ELINOR. You've finished your work in Egypt at last?

GERALD. Yes. I'm not quite satisfied.

ELINOR. Why not?

GERALD. The last dam was rather a thankless task. There was a good deal of bad feeling among the men. However, I've done it as well as it could be done.

ELINOR. I'm sure of that. And you'll live in England now?

GERALD. No. I think not. Lucy wants to settle

down in Paris, and she generally gets her own way, I find.

ELINOR. She tells me she's very happy.

GERALD. I hope so. I've tried to make her very happy, because——

ELINOR. Because——?

GERALD. [*Coming to her.*] Well, naturally, I—a——
[*A little pause.*]

ELINOR. [*Moves away from him.*] You were a long time getting to The Hall. We expected you down here as soon as you got away from Egypt.

GERALD. Lucy would stay in Paris. And when we got to London, she kept on putting it off. And perhaps I wasn't very keen to come myself.

ELINOR. Why not? I oughtn't to have asked you that.

GERALD. You must have thought our marriage rather sudden.

ELINOR. I was a little surprised. But now it has turned out so well—I do congratulate you—with all my heart.

[*Offering her hand.*]

GERALD. Thanks!

[*Taking her hand.*]

ELINOR. [*Withdrawing it—after a pause.*] And you have your little Lucy. That must be a great happiness.

GERALD. Yes—a child is a great treasure——

[*Looks at her. A long pause.*]

GERALD. Is there anything more I can do for you here?

ELINOR. No. You've already done too much.

GERALD. You mustn't say that. You know I wish to do everything I possibly can for you.

ELINOR. [*Looks at him very reproachfully.*] Isn't

it rather cruel of you to say that—now? [*Quickly.*]
We mustn't speak like this—

[*Turning away from him.*]

GERALD. No. But let me tell you now once for all that if there is anything in the world I can do for you—or for anyone who is dear to you—[*She looks at him inquiringly*—any friend or relation—

ELINOR. I've very few friends. Now Lucy has gone, there's only Grandy. I've been very lonely.

GERALD. Well, think of what I've said—if there is anything I can do to make you happy—

ELINOR. Oh, please say no more! Please!

GERALD. No. But you didn't think me really cruel?

ELINOR. I thought you could soon change and forget.

GERALD. Forget? I've often wished I could.

ELINOR. [*Looks at him and speaks reproachfully.*]
Surely you did as you wished?

GERALD. No. If I'd done as I wished—

ELINOR. But in the letter you wrote me when you left the Abbey that day—you remember?

GERALD. Yes.

ELINOR. You said your whole life must be given to your work and that you had no right to think of anything or anybody else. [*Very bitterly.*] It wasn't very long before you did think of somebody else.

GERALD. I did try to put my whole heart and soul into my work. But it had lost its hold on me. I came up to Cairo—your sister was there—she was your sister—wasn't it natural, under the circumstances?

ELINOR. It must have been very natural to you—since you did it. She was my sister! Was that your

reason? Haven't we just said we wouldn't speak of the past? It's treacherous to Lucy.

GERALD. You're right to remind me. But surely—you can guess the reason of my acting as I did?

ELINOR. Reason? What reason?

[*LUCY appears at window, shows great fright at seeing them together, comes down to them quickly.*

LUCY. Gerald, hasn't Mr. Dibdin made the Abbey perfectly lovely? What are you two chattering about?

GERALD. I've been telling your sister that you've made up your mind we shall live in Paris.

LUCY. Of course we shall! There's no other place. I suppose this dear old thing—[*Fondling ELINOR*—wants us to coop ourselves up down here. Is that what you've been advising him, Nell?

ELINOR. I've not been advising Mr. Forster.

LUCY. She is such a dear old-fashioned thing! [*Fondling ELINOR.*] We must have her up in London sometimes and give her a good time.

[*SIR ROBERT and NOLL enter at window, SIR ROBERT carrying tins of smoked salmon, anchovies, and olives, and NOLL carrying three terrines of pâté-de-foie-gras.*

SIR ROBERT. Give me your lot, Dibdin. I'll take them in to cook. [*Taking NOLL's terrines.*] And I'll show her the right way to make an omelette. [*Exit.*

NOLL. We expected to find you at the Abbey—

LUCY. I strolled round the grounds. [*Looking at her watch.*] Nell, I want to see all the other rooms before lunch. Come and show me. [*Seeing that ELINOR is hesitating.*] Come along. I want to have a

long talk with you. [*Taking ELINOR's arm.*] Gerald, I shall keep her all to myself till lunch.

[*ELINOR goes off with her reluctantly.*]

NOLL. Well, what do you think of the old place, Gerald? The old boy's been doing me pretty thoroughly, hasn't he?

GERALD. Noll—that woman and child who were here this morning?

NOLL. They're old friends of Miss Shale. They're staying at Waventry, and she has them over sometimes. Nice little kid, isn't he? I say, what's old Shale going to touch you for next? He's getting a motor garage out of me!

GERALD. That boy is Elinor's child!

NOLL. [*Startled.*] Elinor's child! What are you talking about?

GERALD. You remember what you told me—that you saw Elinor with her child at Brighton——

NOLL. I told you——?

[*Has a shock which he instantly conceals from GERALD.*]

GERALD. You know you did. You said your doctor friend told you her history, how she had come to Brighton and passed herself off as a married woman, whose husband was in India. [*NOLL shows great concern and some confusion.*] You surely remember? You aren't going to deny it?

NOLL. [*Feeling his way.*] No. But if you remember, old man, when I came back that afternoon, I was going to give you all the particulars, but you stopped me, and told me never to mention the matter again.

GERALD. I know I did.

NOLL. Well, there's no occasion to mention it now, is there?

GERALD. Yes. You're quite sure it was Miss Shale whom you saw at Brighton station with the child?

NOLL. [*After a pause.*] Yes, I saw her there.

GERALD. Is there any possibility that your doctor friend made a mistake?

NOLL. [*Hard pressed.*] He may have done so. I didn't pay very much attention to what he was saying——

GERALD. [*Very angrily.*] You didn't pay much attention? And on the strength of his gossiping story you come to me and take away the reputation of the woman I loved!

NOLL. Woman you—— [*Recovers himself.*] It was a stupid, clumsy thing to do. I'd no right to mention it. Only, if you recollect, you dragged it out of me——

GERALD. I had very strong reasons——

NOLL. I couldn't guess that. I'm terribly sorry.

GERALD. Tell me exactly what this doctor told you about Elinor. [*NOLL hesitates.*] You don't wish to—— as she's my wife's sister? You needn't. Lucy told me everything herself.

NOLL. [*Again is surprised.*] Mrs. Forster told you?

GERALD. Yes, that same afternoon, after you had gone out of the room.

NOLL. Mrs. Forster spoke of it?

GERALD. Yes. I was fearfully upset by what you had told me. When Lucy came in, I purposely dragged in Brighton, to watch the effect on her. She saw that I knew something. Of course she was very much concerned for her sister. I couldn't rest till I'd got the whole truth from her.

NOLL. She told you the truth?

GERALD. Yes; she confirmed your story. She owned she had gone down to Brighton with Elinor, and had taken care of her through her trouble. Isn't that what your doctor friend told you?

NOLL. Yes, something like that——

[LUCY enters quickly with a telegram in her hand.

LUCY. [*Apprehensively—looks from one to the other.*] Gerald, this came just after we left. [*Giving him telegram.*] They've sent it over from The Hall.

GERALD. Allow me? [*Opens telegram, reads it.*] Good heavens!

LUCY. What is it?

GERALD. The natives have mutinied and broken down the dam. They've had to send soldiers. They want me to come up to town and consult.

LUCY. Of course you'll go.

GERALD. Yes; I must go up this evening.

LUCY. No, we'd better go at once. I've been so uneasy about baby all the morning. [*To NOLL.*] I left her in London with a bad cold. Gerald, I feel sure she's worse.

GERALD. Oh, nurse would have telegraphed.

LUCY. No; she's so careless. I'm positive she's worse. Let me see your telegram.

[*He gives her telegram.*

NOLL. Pretty bad news, eh, old man? Does it mean your going out again?

GERALD. I'm afraid it may.

LUCY. [*Having read telegram.*] You see, they say: "Come up as soon as possible." [*Giving him telegram.*

GERALD. We can't get up till after office hours.

LUCY. [*Glancing at watch on her wrist.*] Yes, if we go at once, we can just catch the one-twenty at the junction.

GERALD. We must stay to lunch now.

LUCY. No—I'm frightfully anxious about Lucy. If anything happened to her, you'd never forgive yourself. We must go! Tell them to have the motor ready. [*Trying to get him off.*]

GERALD. [*Looking at telegram.*] It looks pretty bad. Perhaps I'd better get up at once.

LUCY. Make haste! There isn't a moment— [*Exit Gerald at window. To NOLL.*] I'm sure my baby is worse—I've had a presentiment all the morning—

[*ELINOR enters.*]

ELINOR. I'm afraid lunch will be late. I wish Grandy wouldn't interfere in the kitchen—

LUCY. Nell, Gerald has had a telegram from the office. There has been a mutiny—they've broken down the dam—Gerald has to go to town at once.

ELINOR. But you'll stay to lunch?

LUCY. We can't. And I'm sure Lucy is worse—I'll go and hurry Gerald with the motor—

[*Exit at window.*]

ELINOR. Lucy seems very anxious to get away from us.

NOLL. Yes. I don't wonder! [*ELINOR looks surprised. He comes to her.*] Miss Shale, I don't know how to tell you, but I've got to!

ELINOR. What?

NOLL. I've been the means of doing you the greatest wrong—[*She looks at him*—the greatest wrong in this world. I didn't know it—you may be sure of that. I must have been a clumsy fool.

ELINOR. Tell me.

NOLL. You don't remember meeting me at Brighton Station five years ago?

ELINOR. I never met you at Brighton.

NOLL. I was with Doctor Denby Rodd. You didn't notice me. He saw you into your train——

ELINOR. Yes, I remember.

NOLL. After you'd gone, he told me your sister's story.

ELINOR. He told you?

NOLL. Yes. He did it quite carelessly—without thinking. He couldn't have supposed we should ever meet. But he told me.

ELINOR. Then you've known all along?

NOLL. Yes. I recognized you that first day we met at the Abbey. Gerald saw that I did—he questioned me and got out of me what Rodd had told me.

ELINOR. Then Gerald has known all along about Lucy?

NOLL. No. There's the horrible, horrible mistake.

ELINOR. Mistake?

NOLL. Gerald got the impression it was you.

ELINOR. That it was I? You allowed him to think that?

NOLL. No, no! How can you think that? I spoke vaguely—I didn't mention which sister. I've only just found out that he thinks it was you.

ELINOR. Then that's why he went away. Now I understand. But why didn't you put him right?

NOLL. I didn't know he thought it was you. I saw he took it very much to heart; but I thought it was because of his attachment for your sister. When he married her, I thought he had forgiven her!

ELINOR. [*Has been crushed by the revelation.*] I see. [*Suddenly.*] But why didn't Lucy put him right? He must have spoken to her about it.

NOLL. Oh, yes! He spoke to her that same afternoon, and she told him it was your child.

ELINOR. She told him——? Say that again!

NOLL. She told him it was your child.

ELINOR. She didn't! She couldn't!

NOLL. And that she had gone down to Brighton——

ELINOR. No——

NOLL. To see you through your trouble.

ELINOR. She didn't! She couldn't! She didn't! She couldn't!

NOLL. She could—and she did!

ELINOR. No! No! Lucy! She—— No, no, no, no! It isn't possible! It isn't true!

NOLL. Gerald told me so just now. Ask her yourself.

ELINOR. [*Very quiet.*] Of course! Of course! It's all plain. Her getting to Egypt, her staying away from me, her presents—— [*With a sudden frantic rage.*] Where is she? [*Rushing toward window.*] Where is she?

NOLL. [*Stopping her.*] Stay! Think a moment.

ELINOR. [*Struggling to get past him.*] Where is she? Where is she? Where is she?

NOLL. Stay! Think! Just for a moment. There's another side. Gerald——

ELINOR. She shall tell him the truth before me. I'll make her!

NOLL. Think what that will mean to him just now. I could hardly keep from telling him myself. I will tell him if you wish.

ELINOR. No! She shall tell him!

NOLL. But not now. For Heaven's sake—— Think! Gerald!

ELINOR. But she shan't escape!

NOLL. She shan't escape. I'll take care of that.

ELINOR. No, I'll take care of that! Where is she? Where is she?

NOLL. Control yourself.

ELINOR. I have controlled myself——

NOLL. Bear it a little longer——

ELINOR. I can't—I can't——

NOLL. Yes; think! The moment Gerald knows, it will break him up. There'll be a scandal—perhaps a separation. Is that what you want? Can't we spare him?

ELINOR. But she shan't escape.

NOLL. She won't—she isn't. By God, she shall pay for it! But let her get away now—say Good-bye to her quite calmly.

ELINOR. I can't do that——

[GERALD'S voice heard off stage: All right—

I'll say Good-bye for you.

NOLL. Hush! Gerald! Sit down! Keep quiet! Let them get away now!

GERALD. [*Comes hurriedly up to window.*] We haven't a moment. Lucy says if the child is all right she'll come again soon.

ELINOR. Yes, tell her to come soon.

[NOLL warns her with a look.

GERALD. If all's well, I'll send her to-morrow. Good-bye. Excuse our running away. Good-bye Noll.

[*Exit from window L.*

NOLL. Good-bye.

ELINOR. [*Calling after him.*] Tell her to come to-morrow.

GERALD. [*Off stage.*] Good-bye.

ELINOR. [*At window. Calls.*] To-morrow! Look! She's blowing me a kiss! She shan't go——

[*Starting off.*

[NOLL *snatches her hand and draws her into the room.*

NOLL. Control yourself!

ELINOR. She blew me a kiss! She blew me a kiss! Judas sister! Judas sister! Judas sister!

CURTAIN

[*Ten days pass between Acts III and IV.*]

ACT IV

SCENE: *The same. About four on an afternoon in November. Outside the windows twilight darkening on the wintry landscape and on the Abbey. Inside, a bright fire. Discover ELINOR seated over fire. GIBBARD draws curtains and lights lamps.*

ELINOR. Haven't Mrs. Callard and Master Callard come in yet?

GIBBARD. No, miss. Will Mrs. Callard and the young gentleman be staying on?

ELINOR. Yes. Why do you ask?

GIBBARD. Before Sir Robert went up to London he said they'd have to pack up and go.

ELINOR. They will be staying for some time—perhaps altogether. Cook knows Sir Robert will be back for dinner?

GIBBARD. Yes, miss.

(SIR ROBERT enters in outdoor winter clothes, with a handsome fur coat.

SIR ROBERT. Well, here I am—back again. Gibbard, just see there's a good fire in my room. And take up a whiskey-and-soda, will you?

GIBBARD. Yes, Sir Robert. [Exit.

SIR ROBERT. [*Has taken off hat and coat and put them on chair.*] You got my telegram?

ELINOR. Yes. I thought you were staying on with Mr. Forster and Lucy?

SIR ROBERT. No. They've come down to the Hall with me this morning. The Government have given Gerald the entire control of the irrigation works. He accepted it last night, and he has to hurry out there as soon as possible.

ELINOR. Is Lucy going with him?

SIR ROBERT. Yes; of course. So we shall lose her again. And just as I thought she was going to settle down with us, and be a comfort to my few remaining years. They're leaving the old limousine motor, and I believe Lucy means to have it thoroughly done up for us.

ELINOR. They came down to the Hall with you?

SIR ROBERT. Yes; we got down to lunch. Lucy motored me to the level crossing, and I walked up.

ELINOR. Lucy came with you to the level crossing, and she didn't come on here?

SIR ROBERT. We happened to meet Mrs. Callard and her brat, so Lucy put me down and took them into Waventry.

ELINOR. Lucy took Mrs. Callard and Dick to Waventry—what for?

SIR ROBERT. I'd been telling her that you'd had them staying here for the last fortnight, turning the whole house upside down. Lucy thinks about it as I do.

ELINOR. What does she think?

SIR ROBERT. She can't think why on earth you should have a parcel of Brighton lodging-house people hanging about the place—she's going to talk to you about it.

ELINOR. Then she's coming back here?

SIR ROBERT. Yes. She says Gerald may not have time to come over to say Good-bye so she wants to take us and Dibdin over to dinner to-night at the Hall. I suppose you'll go?

ELINOR. I'll tell her when she comes.

SIR ROBERT. What's the reason you're treating her so badly?

ELINOR. Am I treating her badly?

SIR ROBERT. She says she has written you three nice sisterly letters, and you haven't sent her a word in reply.

ELINOR. Yes, that is so.

SIR ROBERT. Then I don't wonder she doesn't seem very anxious to meet you.

ELINOR. No, I don't wonder.

SIR ROBERT. When she does come, I hope you'll receive her as a sister and remember all she has done for us, and show your gratitude as I do—— Damn it! I forgot the champagne. Gerald has just got in twenty dozen of Pommery for Egypt. I believe he meant to give me a couple of cases. And I forgot to remind him.

ELINOR. Then he's not coming over here?

SIR ROBERT. He said he'd try to run over for a few minutes; but he wasn't sure.

ELINOR. But Lucy is coming?

SIR ROBERT. Yes; and I hope you'll follow her advice about Mrs. Callard and the brat. Because I've made up my mind they don't stay in my house any longer.

ELINOR. This isn't your house. Mr. Dibdin has a lease of it from you with the Abbey. And you know if I ask him he'll let Mrs. Callard and Dick stay here

as long as I please. And I shall ask him—the first time I see him.

SIR ROBERT. [*Nonplussed.*] Oh! [*Takes up his hat.*] Oh! [*Takes up his coat.*] Oh, very well!

[GIBBARD shows in NOLL. Enter NOLL. Exit GIBBARD.]

NOLL. Well, Sir Robert, back from London? [*To ELINOR.*] How d'ye do? [*Shaking hands.*]

ELINOR. How d'ye do?

SIR ROBERT. Yes; Gerald and Lucy came down with me to the Hall.

NOLL. I had a letter from Gerald this morning. He tells me the Government are going to do just what he wants.

SIR ROBERT. Yes. I advised him to stand up to them. "Don't stand any nonsense," I said. "Stand up to them." And he did—he may be thankful I was with him at the critical moment. [*Exit.*]

NOLL. So our little lady sister has come to see us? Does she know you've found her out?

ELINOR. No. [*Taking letter out of pocket.*] Here's her last letter to me. [*Giving it to him.*] She couldn't have written that if she thought I knew.

NOLL. You haven't written to her?

ELINOR. No. I can't do it in a letter. I must have her face to face. I would have gone up, but I thought of Gerald. I want to spare him as long as I can.

NOLL. You'll have to tell Gerald, I suppose?

ELINOR. No. She'll have to tell him—in my presence. How can I let him think that I—— Read what she says there.

NOLL. [*Reading from letter.*] "I cannot imagine why you haven't answered my letters. I suppose you

are still jealous. I can only tell you once more that before I married Gerald, I asked him again and again: 'You are sure I am not taking you from Elinor?' You can believe me or not, as you please. But however unkind and ungrateful you are to me, I shall still remember my duty to you as a sister, and do all I can to make you happy." Very, very pretty! Quite charming! [*Giving letter back to ELINOR.*] Where is she now?

ELINOR. She has taken Dick and Callard to Waverbury. Grandy says she is going to ask me to send Dick away; but I won't! Grandy is always threatening to turn him and Mrs. Callard out. This is your house. You won't ask me to send Dick away?

NOLL. Certainly not—if you wish to keep him. But—mightn't it be better?

ELINOR. Better to send him away?

NOLL. You're very fond of the little Nipper?

ELINOR. I can't tell you. I've never had anything all my own to love. Lucy took Gerald away from me, just as I had won him. Then Dick came. He was the only thing near to me. He filled up the great hole there was in my heart. I could almost forgive Lucy, because when she took Gerald from me she gave me Dick.

NOLL. Not much credit to her for that! She can't claim the boy herself.

ELINOR. [*Triumphantly.*] No; that's it! She's going away from England. She can't take him. She'll be obliged to leave him with me. I shall bring him up, and have him all to myself. That's all I've got to live for now.

NOLL. You've thought it all over, I suppose?

ELINOR. Thought what over? You don't wish me to send him away?

NOLL. No. But I ought to tell you——

ELINOR. What?

NOLL. I'm sure Mrs. Callard is discretion itself. But a mother's is a very difficult rôle to play. Mrs. Callard doesn't look like the Nipper's mother. She doesn't talk and act like the Nipper's mother. The woman she lodged with at Waventry has scented it out, and started a good deal of gossip.

ELINOR. Gossip? What gossip?

NOLL. That the Nipper isn't Mrs. Callard's child. And people are saying——

ELINOR. People are saying—— What are people saying? Tell me.

NOLL. You've had the boy here constantly. You've shown that you're passionately attached to him. And now you've brought him to live with you.

ELINOR. They're not saying that I——?

NOLL. It's best you should know——

ELINOR. [*After a long pause.*] Thank you. Is it much talked of?

NOLL. You know what a hotbed of gossip this little place is. Wouldn't it be better to send them away?

ELINOR. No. I've nobody but Dick. I won't give him up. I've got him now—tight—he loves me. He's all I have. I'll keep him. Let them say what they choose.

NOLL. If you feel like that, you're right to keep him. But have you counted the cost? You know what it will mean in a small place like this.

ELINOR. I don't care. I won't give him up. No! No! No! Whatever they say—— [*Suddenly.*]

That's why Mrs. Farebrother cut me yesterday. I suppose everybody will cut me.

NOLL. It will be terribly difficult for you. Won't you let me make it easy?

ELINOR. What can you do?

NOLL. I have the toughest skin. I don't care a snap of the finger for public opinion. Let me give you my name. It need go no further than that—unless you wish. Let me try to make up for having brought this on you. [*She makes a gesture of protest.*] Yes, it was my silly, clumsy tongue that put Gerald on the wrong track. Let me get it off my conscience. Come to me. My name would shelter you and the boy. I'm fond of the little Nipper, too. Nobody dared say a word then; or, if they did, it wouldn't matter. Never mind if you haven't any love to give to me now. You'll come to me at last—I think you will—I know you will. But if you can't—I'll wait till you do. And I can make it all so easy for you. Come to me! Be my wife!

ELINOR. Oh, you are kind—but I feel it would be a false position for me. And it would be like cheating you.

NOLL. I love being cheated. Everybody cheats me. It's the only fun I get out of life. And you won't cheat me very long. I'll risk it. Just try it.

ELINOR. Oh! I wish I could!

[*LUCY stands at the door in outdoor clothes.*

NOLL glances from one to the other.

ELINOR's face hardens.

NOLL. How d'ye do?

[*Shaking hands.*

LUCY. How d'ye do? [*Moving toward ELINOR, showing a furtive fright which she tries to hide under*



"You'll come to me at last—I think you
will—I know you will."



a careless manner.] You don't seem very pleased to see me, Nell. [*Making as if to embrace her. ELINOR flashes with anger, and moves away.*] Aren't you going to speak to me?

ELINOR. Yes, by and by.

[*LUCY turns to NOLL, shrugs her shoulders with an aggrieved air.*

NOLL. Gerald hasn't come over with you?

LUCY. No; he's terribly rushed to get away. He may not have time to come over. So I told him I should bring you and Grandy and Nell back with me to dinner at the Hall. You'll come?

NOLL. I'll be ready whenever you are. [*Exit.*

[*LUCY steals a glance at ELINOR. ELINOR stands speechless, in a white rage.*

LUCY. What's the matter? What have I done now? [*A little jeering laugh from ELINOR.*] Really, Nell, you are impossible! I've done everything in the world to make you happy. On my way here I made Gerald promise to have the limousine done up as a present for you—— [*Another jeering laugh from ELINOR.*] Oh, well, if you choose to fling all my kindness back in my face, you must do so. [*Changes her tone.*] There's another thing perhaps you won't like. My maid is leaving me, so I'm going to take Mrs. Callard out with me to Egypt. I met her and Dick this afternoon at the level crossing and took them to Waventry with me. I've arranged everything with her.

ELINOR. What have you arranged?

LUCY. I'm sending over for Dick and her in the morning to take them up to London with us. I told her to go and get everything packed at once.

ELINOR. [*Hard, white, bitter, suppressing herself*

with great effort.] You're going to take Dick to Egypt?

LUCY. Yes. I've wanted to have him with me for a long time, only I didn't know how to manage it without rousing Gerald's suspicions. I told him we knew the woman at Brighton. [ELINOR *laughs*.] What's the matter?

ELINOR. Nothing. You told him we knew the woman at Brighton—— Go on.

LUCY. And that she'd make a good maid for me, and be just the sort of useful person we want over there.

ELINOR. Yes, yes—and that Dick would come with her?

LUCY. I said of course she'd bring her boy.

ELINOR. Of course! Of course! And what did he say?

LUCY. He made no objection. In fact, he seemed to be pleased.

ELINOR. Pleased? Why should he be pleased?

LUCY. He thought it would settle her and make her comfortable. So it has all turned out quite fortunately.

ELINOR. So it's all settled?

LUCY. Quite! I'm sorry if you don't like it; but really I've done enough to please you, so this time I shall please myself.

ELINOR. You've quite made up your mind to take Dick to Egypt?

LUCY. Yes. Baby isn't very strong, and I may have to send her back to England. And I really want to have Dick with me. He's just the age to make a nice companion.

ELINOR. Yes—— You've quite made up your mind to take him from me?

LUCY. You mustn't look at it in that light. You've been very kind to him; but I want him to be fondest of me. And you have a little stolen him from me.

ELINOR. Stolen! Ha! Stolen!

LUCY. Well, haven't you? He cares more for you than he does for me. And, after all, I am his mother.

ELINOR. You've quite made up your mind to take him?

LUCY. Yes; quite! [ELINOR laughs a terrible jeering laugh.] What is the matter with you, Nell? Really I don't understand you. I give you up.

ELINOR. Ah! You give me up, do you? You give me up! And you take Dick?

LUCY. [Impatiently.] Yes! Yes! Yes! Don't I tell you—yes! And that settles the matter. [With a sudden fright and a changed tone.] Of course, I trust you to say nothing to Gerald.

ELINOR. Ah! You trust to me! You trust to me!

LUCY. [Terribly frightened.] You gave me your sacred promise. You won't dare to break it.

ELINOR. Won't I? Won't I?

LUCY. Nell, you won't play me such a dirty trick?

ELINOR. Dirty trick? Is it anything to the dirty trick you've played me all these years?

[Leaps at her, seizes her with both hands, shaking her.]

LUCY. Nell! Nell! You'll choke me! Let me go! [ELINOR throws her on to chair, stands over her.] You know?

ELINOR. Yes. He loved me. He told me so that day. But you stole him away from me—you thief!

You stole him, and you stole his child from me. Never lie by his side, never go to him without thinking you're in my place. Your baby, your Lucy is mine by rights—every bone, every morsel of her! Never look at her, never kiss her without thinking that. You robbed me of her, you cheated me out of her and him, as you cheated me out of everything else. I've given up to you all my life long—everything—I let you go to London at first, and stayed down here to drudge. When you came to me in your trouble, I put by everything to save you—you might have been anything, anywhere—on the streets—if I hadn't saved you. I gave him up for you. And when he came to me again, and I'd won him again, you put your shame on me, you ruined me in his eyes, and you stole him from me—you thief, you thief, you thief, you thief!

[Seizing her again on the chair.]

LUCY. Nell! Nell!

ELINOR. And now you'd rob me of my boy. For he is mine. I've watched over him and nursed him and made him love me. You cared nothing for him till you saw he loved me most, and now you'd rob me of him.

LUCY. No—no—no! He shall stay with you.

ELINOR. Yes. I'll take care of that! I won't part from him. I've never had anything all my own but him, and you shan't take him from me.

LUCY. I won't try. You won't tell Gerald? You won't?

ELINOR. No; you shall tell him yourself. We'll go over to him. Come! Take me to him.

[Seizing her, dragging her toward door.]

LUCY. No—Nell, no! *[Holding her back.]*

[A tap at the door. NELL enters.]

NOLL. I beg pardon. Gerald is over at the Abbey. He had half an hour, so he just ran over to say "Good-bye" to me. He's coming here in a few minutes.

ELINOR. We're waiting for him.

LUCY. No, Mr. Dibdin. Nell and I will come over to the Abbey as soon as we've finished.

[*With an imploring look at ELINOR.*]

ELINOR. Mr. Dibdin knows what we are talking about.

LUCY. Mr. Dibdin knows?

ELINOR. Yes. He is a friend of Dr. Denby Rodd. Mr. Dibdin has known about you all through. He knows what you told Gerald about me.

LUCY. [*To NOLL.*] You know—? You haven't told Gerald?

NOLL. No; Gerald knows nothing—at present.

LUCY. You won't tell him? [*Turning to ELINOR.*] Nell, you won't tell Gerald? Nell, I'm at your mercy—don't break up my home—his home. Oh, you won't be so cruel! Think what it will be—Mr. Dibdin, help me persuade her—for Gerald's sake—help me—oh! Very well! Ruin me if you please; but you'll ruin him too. You'll ruin all his work—you'll have that to remember all your life—Mr. Dibdin, persuade her—for Gerald's sake! Nell!

ELINOR. What am I to do?

NOLL. You must decide. If you could spare Gerald from knowing just now—he has a pretty stiff job in front of him out there—he'll need all his nerve and energy for it—if you could spare him for the time—till that's over.

LUCY. Nell, have mercy!

NOLL. I think you might say nothing till he gets through this business—won't you?

ELINOR. [*After a long evident struggle.*] Very well. He shall not know it through me.

LUCY. Thanks, thanks, Nell—thanks with all my heart! [*Trying to take her hand.*]

ELINOR. [*Repulsing her.*] I'm not doing it for you. I'm doing it for him and his work.

NOLL. Shall I fetch him to say "Good-bye"?

LUCY. Not for a few minutes. I want to talk to Nell.

ELINOR. I've nothing to say to you. Bring him over.

LUCY. Not yet—please not yet—not for a few minutes.

NOLL. Very well. [*Exit.*]

LUCY. Oh, Nell—oh, Nell—I can't bear it! Forgive me—say you forgive me!

ELINOR. Forgive you? What's the use of saying that? Will that give me back the last five years? Will that give me a child to bear to him? Will that give me the home and the husband that you've stolen from me?

LUCY. Nell, I never meant to do it! Let me tell you—

[*ELINOR laughs.*]

ELINOR. You have told me—[*Mocking*]"You're quite sure I'm not taking you from Elinor?"—"I pressed him again and again"—"In any case, I shall never marry your sister"—"Oh, Nell, you are splendid! I shall never forget your kindness! Never! And if ever I get a chance to repay you—" Well, you have repaid me! We'll cry quits! Now go! I never wish to see you again. Go!

LUCY. No, no, I can't! Oh, I've been a cruel, selfish

beast to you, and you've been the best and truest friend and sister that ever a woman had. I see it now. I hate myself. I shall never have a moment's peace unless you say you forgive me!

ELINOR. I can't! I'm not made like that. I can't say what I don't feel! Go away now, and when I feel that I can really forgive you from my heart, I'll write to you or come to you.

LUCY. No, no; forgive me now! Listen, Nell, I do mean this: I'll try to make Gerald a better wife from this hour. I'll do all in my power to win his love; and I think I can—I'll slave to win him, and when I'm sure of him, I'll tell him all the truth, so that he may not think ill of you. Forgive me, Nell! *[A pause.]*

ELINOR. You mean that? Swear you'll tell him.

LUCY. I swear I'll tell him. Say you forgive me, Nell.

ELINOR. Come to me or write to me when you have told him, and I'll forgive you. Yes, I'll forgive you.

[DICK enters.]

DICK. Mummy says she's going to take me away with the other Miss Shale. I shan't go. *[To LUCY.]* I'm not going with you. I'm going to stay with my own Miss Shale.

LUCY. Yes, darling—so you shall. But you'll give me a good long kiss if I let you stay, won't you?

DICK. Oh, very well! *[LUCY snatches him to her, kisses him again and again. He gets restless.]* I don't want you to kiss me all that.

LUCY. But you love me a little, don't you, darling?

ELINOR. Yes, Dick. Love her.

DICK. Oh, very well—if you tell me to.

LUCY. Give me just one more kiss, because I'm going away ever so far and ever so long.

[LUCY draws him to her and kisses him again.]

NOLL enters.

NOLL. Gerald is waiting over at the Abbey. What are you going to do?

ELINOR. Lucy has promised to tell him, haven't you, Lucy?

LUCY. Yes.

NOLL. When?

LUCY. When he gets through his business—when he can bear it. I will tell him, indeed I will!

NOLL. You'll find it best—because if Gerald doesn't know when he comes back to England, I shall tell him myself. He's got to know some day. It will come better from you than from me. Shall I fetch him now?

LUCY. No; I'll go to him myself. [Imploringly.] Nell!

ELINOR. Good-bye. [Exit LUCY, crying.]

DICK. It will be jolly living with you always. Shall we live here?

NOLL. No, old man. We're all going to live at the Abbey.

ELINOR. No—no——

NOLL. You must, for your own sake——

ELINOR. Not yet!

NOLL. Not yet; but when you wish. Dear, let me scrape together a little bit of happiness for you out of it all—you will, won't you?

ELINOR. Not yet—oh, I don't know—perhaps——

CURTAIN

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